■ World / A9
Mosul bomb attack kills 18 Gls, 4 Iraqis

■ Business / B1
Neda says economy grew 6.1% in 2004

■ Metro / A17
Comics, T-shirts, pins, other FPJ souvenirs still bestsellers

■ News / A2
Archbishop Rosales says Christmas whispering to us 'after tempest, sorrow are gone'

■ BYLINE INQUIRER
Mga bagong papatok: Mura, di-tigtas—at smuggled!

German firm accuses gov't of breaking law on Naia 3

THE GERMAN firm Fraport AG, which owns 30 percent of the consortium that built the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3), accused the government yesterday of breaking the law when it expropriated the terminal on Tuesday.

"Fraport considers the action of the Philippine government a further flagrant breach of

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, December 23, 2004 • 32 pages • Vol. 20 | no. 13

website: www.inq7.net

Legions grieve over last FPJ blockbuster

'This is the real voters' protest, GMA take note'

By Veh Constantino, Edson C. Tandoc Jr. Christian V. Esguerra and Tina Santos

EVEN the heavens of them all had her limits.

Looking like a color renter in the midst of pandemonium, actress Susan Roces could only take so much and gave way to her tears. Leaning over the maroon coffin, she gave Fernando Poe Jr. a last kiss, sending a high citizen that had gripped the nation for 10 days.

A billion tears may have summed it all up in a phrase, blurring the huge wake and yesterday's funeral to a box office smash, "unparalleled in [Philippine movie] history."

By most accounts, the multitude that carried the movie king from the Imelda Avenue Church to his grave at Manila's North Cemetery lulled the streets the enormously sexually enhanced as more than one million which lasted unsurpassed opposition rallies Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino in 1983.

But it was large enough to worry President Macapagal-Arroyo's security forces, who only resolved blocking Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in the early hours of yesterday's funeral guided the marchers toward Manila-ruling Police.

Among the multitude of mourners, human rights lawyer Rene Saguisag said: "This is a powerful political statement. This is the real election protest, not the one in the Supreme Court. The supreme court is not credible."

GMA should learn a thing or two from this, he said.

Also consoled by family and relatives who were mostly in white, Roces stood out in her black outfit, appearing in the morning mass as Fr. Jerry Bautista performed final funeral rites for Poe, who

THE BABY WOMEN in FPJ's life and death: his widow Susan Roces and daughter Grace watch his casket disappear inside the hearse. (At right) A bus rallies sensation: the motorcade has a festive aura as it passes Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue (EDSA) in Mandaluyong. (Main photo by Pepsi Lagrosa and AFP)

Poe's memory, face live on in death mask

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and PDI Research

HIS MEMORY—and his face—will live on.

Minutes before yesterday's pre-dawn eucharistic Mass to consecrate the late Fernando Poe Jr., sculptor Napoleon V. Abueva took a mold of the actor's face, prelude to what was done to the mummified faces Aquino more than two decades ago.

With the mold, the face of the legendary King of Philippine movies will be reconstructed in a "death mask" by sculptors Dan Dela Dalmond added.

"I just thought about it on the last day of the wake. The family gave me permission," Abueva told the inquirer.

The mold can be used in the future in case the Poe family decides to have some cast of the actor's face, said a member of the organizing committee for Poe's wife, Susan Roces.

(SEE CARTOON P.A2)

Fan loses slippers, walks 6.5 km barefoot

THE MOB for yesterday's funeral march for the remains Poe Jr. was almost built in.

Ka-ibes, Senator Aquino-Oreta, Jose Jinggoy Estrada, Mayor Fernando Poe Jr. were served at chest-leaders, egging the motorists to sing "Gloria Labandera."

Somewhere on Espana Boulevard in Manila, someone began singing the DOJ dee-ding President Macapagal-Arroyo. Within seconds the crowd had taken a up and it throughout the march, changing a word or two once

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

always (short) or magpatuloy (short) for Gloria (or another woman).

For the singing was more physical than angry, and the voice singing appeared largely entertained.

There was a continuous mix of

Two funerals, one message: Dawn of new life

By Michael Lim Ubac, Luigie A. del Puerto and Leila B. Salaverria

TWO FUNERALS, one message.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. protested, said that with the funeral of Fernando Poe Jr., he could not help but remember that of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. in 1983.

Pimentel was seated by the son of (opposition), then said friends that joined the funeral march for the most popularly lawyers as "FPJ" but said the numbers were beyond compare.

(CONTINUED ON A2)

DOJ bares plot to oust Gloria, install Susan, junta

By Philip C. Tubeo Alcuin Papa and Christine O. Avendaño

A PLOT to oust the funeral of actor Fernando Poe Jr. to overthrow the administration and replace it with a military junta, with Poe's widow Susan Roces as a figurehead, was disclosed yesterday morning by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Gonzalez said not had the 48 hours of on the funeral was "critical" because the alleged conspirators for an "Edsa repat" operation still "working."

He said the government found the plot credible after intelligence operatives intercepted top conversations between an Army colonel and an opposition lawyer who had set the alleged plan to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"It is credible because it involves electronic intercepts and were very specific as to the plans. I myself have heard the (intercepts) ... that's GMA is confident that she can stave off this coup, Gonzalez said.

The threat, if there was one, appeared to have passed by late afternoon.

(SEE P.A2)

A CELEBRATION of life as the church grounds celebrations and hearse like as Fr. RC Lapuebla the hearse could neither save the growing palaver to fulfill both the lives of her priests, Speaker De Venecia and his wife Gina, President Arroyo and former President Cory Aquino are to their right. At far left is Gina's mother Amanda Vera Perez.

KC soars on wings of joy, laughter, tears

By Carlito Pablo, Jolen Liboy Gavilán, Margaux C. Orte and Cynthia D. Rubeo

FOR THE days, Gina Vera Perez de Venecia like Susan Roces was a pillar of strength for the family grieving over the loss of its youngest daughter Ms. Jessica Cojuangco KC.

Reminder of the Pangasinan Mass, Gina was overcome by sorrow and sobbed for several minutes, tightly embracing Perez, their Macapagal-Arroyo who led the rites who at Philippine politics and the diplomatic corps is crumbling with the family.

The two mothers were later joined by a communal embrace by KC's children Jessica Philip and Christopher and Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

At first tried her heart out, her biological mother was liked the church with some of the songs KC loved. Lumagtas had lifetime.

KC, youngest child of the De Venecias, died at a Dec. 16 fire that gutted the family house in Bacnotan, La Union.

Gina rejected from after the Mass held at the Sacrisanto de

A horse called 'Tisoy' steals viewers' hearts

By Luigie A. del Puerto and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

ODD TIES existed in most cities played movie star in the FPJ-funeral march gave to.... "Tisoy" the horse

A3
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Rosales: God's love Christmas focus

ROSALES

By Blanche S. Rivera

AS TIMES prove harder to mean a "Merry Christmas" greeting, the Catholic Church yesterday urged people to derive their joy and peace from the love of Jesus Christ, instead of the traditional material gifts.

In his message to the faithful, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales admitted that the recent natural calamities, economic hardships and political concerns in the country had made it hard for the Filipinos to enjoy the festivities that usually mark Christmas season in the Philippines.

"Christmas is always not recalling of God's love . . . But its celebration is influenced nowadays by the prevailing spiritual, economic, social and political conditions in the country. Natural calamities, escalating poverty, personal and regional tragedies obliterate the mood of celebration like what we experienced today," Rosales said.

"Indeed we find ourselves searching for pockets of joy in our lives or shift in our measures and mind-sets happiness is called to give meaning to our growing of 'Merry Christmas,'" he said.

Rosales, who is spending his second Christmas as archbishop of the country's most influential archdiocese this year, said people should focus on God's love, expressed through the birth of Christ, as appropriate this year's celebration.

"Our search for peace within us ends if we are one hopes elsewhere," the prelate said.

He recalled how the birth of Jesus, called the Emmanuel or God with us, fulfilled the people's longing for salvation. It is the longing that compels them to do good to one another as Filipinos are called now.

"These people who have been touched by God's love in Jesus are capable of bringing about where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of another man. Only here is capable of radically transforming the relationship that now maintains among themselves," Rosales said.

"There is hope when humankind opens its doors to the word of God. This is what Christmas is whispering to us even in the darkness and when the tempest and storms are gone," he said.

The archbishop is leading relief-giving efforts being called the "Pondo ng Pinoy," where the parishes gather 25-centavo donations to raise P30 million which will be used to finance livelihood projects of organizations working for the poor.

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Rebs to feast on holiday delicacies

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY — With the New People's Army's 10-day unilateral ceasefire starting midnight today, communist rebels begin preparations for the traditional noche buena to celebrate Christmas with families and friends.

According to Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, NPA rebels put away their guns to cook their favorite native holiday delicacies like "tuon" and "pinapaitan."

"Some of the Red fighters cook native and kalamay. Some of them take turns in the laborious making of kalamay, while others help in the mangaing of ammos," Rosal said (the lyrics in a mobile phone interview.

The declaration of a truce, which is seen as Jan. 2, 2005, according to Rosal, gives the communist rebels time to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones inside the guerrilla zones just like any typical Filipino community. President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a three-week ceasefire last week.

Rosal said the rebels originally ordered up to Dec. 26, when the CPP celebrates its founding anniversary. "There's a lot of singing. They (rebels) stay inside the zone in the combat and security being patrolled by the NPA," he said.

Children inside the guerrilla zones also get their rebates in cash for Christmas gifts, according to Rosal. "The kids also ask gifts from NPA members. If a kid greets a Red fighter with a 'Merry Christmas,' the comrade is obliged to dig into his pocket for some coins to give to the kid," he said.

But according to Rosal, despite the abundance of the Christmas spirit in the guerrilla-controlled areas, he could not help missing his mother's "lutuan sa bilyra."

"For me, it's the best server in the rebels front, especially if it's accompanied by hot chocolate or coffee. I really can't forget the delicious taste of my mother's servings. I miss her a lot," he said.

The Reuels hail from Buhai (town) in Batangas, Ilocandera Guipna, 91, is suffering from acute arthritis.

During the truce, some NPA members also ready to mingle with the political rival of the Arroyo-cal foundation, Rosal said. Although the rebels participate in the celebration of Christmas in deference to Filipino tradition, "we could not afford to be totally complacent against the treacherous attacks of the enemy," he added.

Rosal said rebel commanders grant their troops prepared to defend themselves if attacked by the police and the military.

He said he was sorry for government troopers because they could not be with their families to enjoy the Christmas holidays in view of the "continuous military operations even during the duration of the government-imposed ceasefire," he said.

Few know DOH seal, poll shows

DOH or the law requiring the regulatory fortification of certain food types took effect last month, less than one-fifth of Filipino families know about the Sangkap Pinoy Seal (SPS) that indicates added vitamin content in the products' ingredients.

A survey by the Social Weather Stations Research Institute (SWRI) shows that only 16 percent of families are aware of fortified foods and what the SPS stands for.

The, however, has obviously not affected how consumption of products with SPS because the same survey shows that almost all, or 96.1 percent of families, buy at least one product with the seal of approval from the Department of Health and the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

The top 10 most commonly consumed fortified foods are long spotlight of Jack Bob juice, Ovaltine chocolate drink, Magic Flakes and other cereal products, Lucky Me and Payless instant noodles, marks like Gold, and Mirada cooking oil and Pilipino-using among the sweeteners.

"The use of these food products by more households, especially on a daily basis, gives a good boost to the government's campaign and the food industry to fight micronutrient malnutrition," the SWRI said in a statement.

Blanche S. Rivera

A FUNERAL FIT FOR 'DA KING'

TENS of thousands disrupt the graveyards and tombstones at Manila's North Cemetery as they wait for their "king" to arrive at his final destination.

THE WIDOW finally lets go of all that is in her heart in the wee hours of Wednesday morning after the funeral Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church.

THE FPJ (Susto GMA 7) helicopter is accommodating one photographer in its helicopter to take aerial shots of the funeral procession.

STANDING role. Erap, who got his nomination from FPJ, was roundly applauded when he arrives in church for the neurological services on Tuesday night and condoles with Susan Roces.

WITH her relatives casting down for the long night at the Sto. Domingo Church grounds, a child lights a candle in remembrance.

BOOM at the top: Along the funeral route, entertainment is provided by a banner rider of "Da King's" last journey.

VOLUNTEERS are on hand at the cemetery for such tasks as burying an FPJ fan, who had fainted, for first aid treatment to one of the improvised medical tents.

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Grains trader rescued from kidnappers in Lanao Norte

(MAR) ILIGAN CITY—Government troopers rescued a 67-year-old grains trader who was kidnapped at a fish terminal in Tagoloan in Oro City two weeks ago, military officials said yesterday.

Agapito Puerto Jr., of Mandaug, Bukidnon, was left unharmed by his kidnappers in Barangay Calabaca in Baroy, Iligan, Lanao del Norte, at around 8:30 p.m., Col. Ben Dolorfino, head of the 2nd Marine Brigade based in Camp Edwin Andrews said.

Puerto was reunited with his family yesterday afternoon. "This is the best gift that the Lord has given me," he told the location.

Dolorfino said the trader was abducted by three men at the bus terminal on Dec. 9 on his way to Limonon, in Lanao del Norte. Puerto, he said, was brought to Barangay Ilud and was held in captivity by a band of armed men led by a certain Commander Ulo.

Before he was abducted, Puerto said he received a male visitor, who passed himself off as a policeman, for a trader in Limonon. He said he traveled with the man to Cagayan de Oro, where they were to board a bus for Limonon.

At the terminal, he said, three men appeared and told him they were taking him in.

Dolorfino said the kidnappers contacted Puerto's family and demanded P5 million in ransom, but the family said it could not raise the amount and begged the kidnappers to release the victim.

On Monday, Dolorfino said the kidnappers lowered the ransom to P4 million and set the payoff on Saturday.

When the family informed authorities about the deal, a rescue operation was planned with the help of local lawmen in Tangcal Iligan, led by Mayor Hadji Lacson Lanzad, the official said.

No shots were fired during the operation, Dolorfino said. Two of the kidnappers, who were guarding Puerto, fled after seeing the advancing troops, he added.

Puerto was brought to the Philippine Marines headquarters in Iligan City where he was met by Undersec Ben and Lanao del Norte Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo.

Recalling his ordeal, Puerto said he was always tense and rarely ate food.

"I did not eat much because I was always anxious [about what his kidnappers were thinking]," he said. Josefh dE. Bacilio, PIA/ Bukidnon bureau

YARONGOY

Tarongoy still alive, says labor chief

By Jerome Aning

A FILIPINO accountant being held captive by insurgents in Iraq is still alive and may be released before the end of January, Foreign Affairs undersecretary Rafael Seguis said yesterday.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas raised hopes for the release of accountant Robert Tarongoy saying she was in constant touch with a high-ranking Foreign Affairs undersecretary who is in Iraq and working on the hostage's release.

Seguis promised not to come home without Tarongoy, said Sto. Tomas.

She said Seguis' efforts made it possible for Tarongoy to speak twice by telephone with his wife Joy Grace.

Tarongoy's abductors have lowered their ransom demand from $1.5 million to an unspecified amount, according to Sto. Tomas.

She said Tarongoy's employers, Saudi Arabia Trading and Contraction Co. (Satco), was expected to pay the ransom.

The Philippine government has an official policy of not paying ransoms.

Marianito Roque Jr., Overseas Workers Welfare Administration chief, said Tarongoy's family was brought home to Davao for the holiday season.

Members of the family were kept in a government "safe house" to prevent them from being interviewed by reporters and, according to officials, for their privacy.

Sto. Tomas said the lack of news on Tarongoy's condition did not mean that the government was neglecting him.

Tarongoy was kidnapped together with an American, a Nepalese, and three Iraqis on Nov. 1 when Iraqi insurgents stormed the Satco offices in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

The Nepalese and Iraqi hostages had been released, but Tarongoy and American Roy Hallum were kept captive by their abductors.

Tarongoy was found to have entered Iraq illegally through Qatar in July after the Philippine government banned the deployment of workers to Iraq following the abduction of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz.

De la Cruz, who hails from Pampanga, was released after President Macapagal-Arroyo agreed to pull out Philippine troops on a humanitarian mission in Iraq ahead of schedule.

Efe D. Cruz was abducted by Iraqi insurgents as he drove an oil tanker across the Iraqi desert from Saudi Arabia, taking a route described as very dangerous.

The former hostage has since found employment in the office of Sen. Lito Lapid, who hired De Cruz as one of his personal drivers.

DOH tells households: Keep holidays healthy with vegetable dishes

By Blanche S. Rivera

MANILA—and live—beyond Christmas.

Concerned about the occurrence of hypertension and heart attacks after the holidays, the Department of Health has advised Filipino households to prepare a healthful Christmas for the traditional noche buena and media noche.

Instead of just the usual feast of ham and queso de bola, try including some vegetable dishes in the main course and fruits and fruit juice for dessert, the DOH said in a health advisory.

"Be kind to your heart. Eat a moderate amount of nutritious foods to maintain your daily activities," it said in an advisory titled "Tatlongsan sa Kapuluhan."

After the heavy meal, drink plenty of liquids, particularly fruit juices, to facilitate excretion and make sure the family does not suffer from indigestion, it said.

Studies show that 12.6 million Filipinos are hypertensive, half of them unaware of their ailment—and it does not suffer a heart attack or stroke, a common complication of high blood pressure.

Around 75 percent of all Filipinos with cardiovascular problems are hypertensive.

The health agency said it would be wise to plan not only the menu but the activities this Christmas. As offices close for the holidays, organize activities so that they do not become a source of tension and stress, the DOH said.

Other reminders:

- Use environment-friendly Christmas decors and make sure that your house does not become a fire hazard due to Christmas lights and decorations.
- If Filipinos shopping for gifts, do not buy items with sharp and pointed edges. Be careful about giving toys with small parts that can cause choking among children.
- If at all possible, avoid crowded areas that are prone to bacteria and usually facilitate the spread of viruses and diseases.

Both adults and children are susceptible to cough, cold and fever during the Christmas season, but the latter are the victims are the health agency warned.

"Take care of yourself and your family against change in temperature. If your cough, cold and fever last more than five days, consult your nearest health center," the DOH said.

And when finally the party's over, sleep. The body and mind require much rest after all the festivities, the DOH said.

RAGUDO'S LITTLE ANGEL

A girl performing an angel dance joins other "winged" children during the traditional lighting of the Christmas tree at the Baguio Country Club in Baguio City. YOY SANTOS/INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

Pimentel asks Lacson, Angara to stay with minority

By Christine O. Avendaño

PATH says Fernando Poe Jr. dead and buried, the political opposition is moving to unite its ranks, at least in the Senate.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., yesterday called on Senators Edgardo Angara and Panfilo Lacson, both members of the minority and latest rivals since the last election, to work together.

"I am asking Edong (Angara) and Ping (Lacson)—they may not agree with me—it's time they stepped with the minority and stood for the interests and rights of the people," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

The minority bloc in the Senate has nine members: the majority has 14.

He said he made the appeal in view of the death of Poe, a popular movie actor and presidential candidate in the May election, after a stroke. Poe was buried yesterday at the Manila South Cemetery.

Pimentel was responding to the query on what would happen to the opposition with the death of Poe, who ran under the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino but led eventually to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Pimentel insisted that the opposition would continue "with its advocacy to protect the rights of the people."

"We would also try to go about our duties as best as we can," he said.

Poe's debut in the polls has been blamed on the split in the opposition after Lacson ran for president as an independent candidate and Angara as vice-presidential candidate.

Lacson had been a member of the opposition Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino while Angara's both.

It was not the first time that Pimentel sought a reconciliation between Angara and Lacson.

Several months ago, the minority leader asked them to stop their tirades against one another. The bitterness intensified after a minority meeting that saw Angara seeking Lacson's ouster from the bloc.

Pimentel has questioned Lacson's loyalty to the minority in the aftermath of the presidential election.

Militant leaders of DOLE 'takeover' face charges

MILITANT groups that barged into the Department of Labor and Employment building and terrorized it for three hours last month will be charged with disrupting public service, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said yesterday.

"We will file charges against a number of people who entered our premises forcibly to hold their rally. I have instructed our lawyers to file the case," the told reporters.

Sto. Tomas was referring to leaders and members of the Sanlakas and the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, the party-list group Partido ng Manggagawa, and their affiliate labor unions that occupied the DOLE building in Intramuros, Manila.

"When they hold their rally they should do it as civilized persons and not break our doors, intimidate our security guards and disrupt public service," the secretary said.

After overpowering the security personnel, about 300 protesters occupied the lobbies of six of the building's seven floors and unfurled banners from the windows. A thousand others blocked Muralla Street in front of the building.

The rally forced the DOLE to dismiss employees early and postpone hearings. Sto. Tomas, who was to attend a congressional hearing, had to leave her office through a side entrance.

The "occupation" ended peacefully after top labor officials met with the protest leaders.

Sto. Tomas said the DOLE's legal department already had the list of leaders of the militants and that the case may be filed within next week or the first week of January. She did not specify the charges being prepared by the department.

The DOLE lawyers, she explained, were completing the affidavits of the security guards and employees who witnessed the takeover.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the issues raised by the groups were not even pending with the DOLE.

The bulk of the protesters were former employees of the garments firm Hoverly Inc. who were demanding payment of their wages. Sto. Tomas said the case was already pending before a labor arbiter.

The militants also demanded the resigning of the labor secretary's closest security person to assume jurisdiction over labor disputes following the death of several sugar workers at the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac.

Sto. Tomas said the protesters should have gone to Congress and pushed for an amendment of the Labor Code, which provides for the secretary's power to issue assumption of jurisdiction orders.

"I think the things they did, they were talking certain issues to put the DOLE down. They should not be doing this to any government office or official," she said. Jerome Aning

NO-ACCREDITATION POLICY

RP to continue deployment of entertainers to Japan

By Jerome Aning

THE GOVERNMENT will continue deploying entertainers to Japan as it can comply with the new restrictions imposed by Japanese immigration authorities, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said yesterday.

Sto. Tomas said the issues were not so bleak for thousands of overseas performing artists (OPAs) in spite of Tokyo's new policy. She revealed that the Philippines was able to steadily deploy 70,000 OPAs every year in the '80s even without government accreditation.

Japan wants the accreditation system abolished in line with its current campaign against human trafficking, instead of certification from the Philippine government. Japanese officials require 10 years of OPAs going to clubs necessary to have completed at least two years' formal course in music, dancing or singing, or at least two years' experience in the entertainment industry.

Sto. Tomas said the no-accreditation policy was not really new. She recounted that when she was with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in the '80s, the government did not have any restrictions on artists and that entertainers with experience or schooling were the only ones allowed to go to Japan.

The secretary said the Artist Accreditation Card and its predecessors, the Artist Record Book and the "yellow card," came into being then as a result of consultations with Japanese authorities which wanted to impose qualifications of carrying musicians, singers, dancers and artists.

Only the Philippines was granted such a privilege, Sto. Tomas said.

"Now there has been a complete turnaround of that policy as Japan wants us to be as par with other countries that are also deploying OPAs. While we can't do things with their way of seeing we are looking for a way of reminding our countries," she said.

The DOLE chief added that she was aware of the reservations many industry stars that the abolition of accreditation could involve the entry of Filipino talents to Japan.

She noted that many OPAs being sent to Japan were only high school graduates. Many talents could not afford formal schooling or training as they wanted to leave for Tokyo as soon as they get their certification papers and earn a living to support their families' needs.

Sto. Tomas said the Philippines was glad to help Japan in its drive against "entertainers" who ended up as prostitutes. "But we want to be assured that there would be no diminution in the number of legitimate entertainers going to Japan."

Without the support and cooperation in the verification policy of the entertainers' qualifications by the sending country, she said, OPAs would be exposed to more victims of sexual abuse, traffickers who could easily produce spurious credentials.

Danilo Cruz, labor undersecretary for employment policies, chairs the Inter-Agency Task Force on Illegal Recruitment and other new Japanese immigration policies were not yet in effect. Specific details and regulations have yet to be issued, he said.

Tokyo was still receiving comments and reactions from various sectors on the viability of the new rules before the year ends, Cruz said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has dispatched Secretary Eduardo Ang of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas to help Japanese entertainment promoters, who visited the country last week, establish an office in Japan to closely work with Philippine Ambassador Domingo Siazon in convincing Tokyo to ensure that the new rule would not adversely affect the Filipino entertainers.

Manila is seeking either a five-year transition period to a discussion on ways to further enhance the Philippine accreditation system for the OPAs.

HAND-clasping hand, President Aquino herself is seen here (clockwise) Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr., Cebu governor Gwen Garcia and Vice President Jejomar Binay.

KC leaves two legacies: Modernization of firefighting gear and an arts and sciences foundation for the poor

KC soars on wings of joy, tears

A DAUGHTER of the grieving family hanging on to each other for solace and support.

San Juanico in Bobon Park, where relatives, friends and supporters released hundreds of balloons and butterflies for KC's "liftoff."

"Go fly, KC! Go fly!" shouted family and friends.

According to KC's older sister Corazon, the balloons symbolized prayers for the late senator while the butterflies stood for KC's beautiful transformation from worldly to spirit.

Former President Corazon Aquino and daughter Rep. Vice President Bob Jr. Cortes, Senate President Frederick Pimentel, Vice President Jejomar Binay, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., legislators, Cabinet members and US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone were among the hundreds that filled the church to the 9,200-cap. Mass.

The mourners came in white and pastel colors, in accordance with the family's request to celebrate KC's fruitful but brief life. Some even a KC pin on her lapel while the President and Aquino wore pink ribbons also worn by those who attended the Mass. The air-conditioned church was decorated with white and pink roses and orchids and red Christmas lights.

The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of the Diocese of Sorsogon, Monsignor Augusto Labao and Jaime Bautista, and Fr. Antonio Rosales.

In his homily, Rosales, the parish priest of Santa Ana, said KC's passing "should not be afraid to grieve and weep "for tears deserve us, our hearts heal and."

"We do not doubt when we go, the circumstances of our death are immaterial. It is how we spend our years (that) matter," Rosales said. "That is (precisely) should be grateful to God for the 24 years that KC lived with them."

He added that the Mass was meant to be "an expression not only of our faith but of our joy even of that joy comes in the midst of tears."

So much grief

In the eulogy by his two daughters the Speaker said: "In a few days, I will be 66 and in all my years, all my ups and downs, I have not experienced so much grief, grievous grief."

He recounted how he lost his "biggest political battle of my life"—when he ran for president in 1998—and how his business in the Middle East almost went bankrupt.

"But all these incredible pains, tragedies that I went through are nothing compared to the grief of losing a daughter who is so young and so innocent and who fight of our life," he said.

Suffocated and burned

For the first time, De Venecia admitted that his daughter not only suffocated but suffered burns when the van trapped in her brother Christopher's driveway.

"I was not ... living to complete the very crucial revenue measures our country badly needed not knowing that in the conflagration my house was burning," the Speaker said.

"If I could trust your love to cut an hour earlier, I could have saved my daughter KC," he lamented. "But that was not meant to be."

He said when he reached his house, he joined the brave firemen who tried four times to rescue his daughter.

"But my daughter was beyond rescue because we could not go in," he said, lamenting that KC could have been saved if the firemen had otherwise come.

KC's legacy

KC leaves behind two legacies.

One is the modernization of the country's firefighting force, and second, the establishment of the KC de Venecia Foundation for the Arts and Sciences.

De Venecia said in his eulogy that the President had agreed on the allocation of P20.70 million in the 2014 national budget for the purchase of six brand-new and state-of-the-art fire trucks.

"The President said to me now 'we should do it,'" he said.

He noted that had the Makati Firefighting Force equipped with these trucks, they could have rescued KC from the fire.

He added that the purchase of such equipment would help ensure that "helpless non-generations or babies or children or people who are sick can be rescued."

De Venecia said that before consulting Malacañang officials on the specific budget allocations, he had brushed the idea to Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (2nd Commission) chair of the House appropriations committee, and House President Feliciano Belmonte.

The House and Senate appropriations committees are set to go into bicameral conference discussions on the 2014 budget by late January.

"Perhaps KC's legacy is how we can, modernize the firefighting forces of the nations," De Venecia said.

He said that his family had agreed to set up the KC de Venecia Foundation for the Arts and Sciences to help talented but poor people.

De Venecia recalled that when KC was only 8 years old, she held an exhibition for her paintings and earned about P500,000.

With this money, she and brother Christopher were able to help five or six construction workers their training for the priesthood.

Full of life

Family and friends took turns speaking about KC.

Actress Kris Aquino said she wished she had been a "good listening" to KC, recalling that she had confided to read her Christmas gift's excerpt on the night of the fire.

"KC was the child who made listening fun made," Kris said. "But now, I promise you one thing: I will make your life second God bless to smile again even if the person who made them smile the most is no longer around."

"She had a big heart and a big appetite for MLDs. She was extremely loyal and she wanted to experience what life had to offer," said Harvey, KC's classmate.

Christopher spoke of his anguish at how the close girls meant to protect him and KC proved to be fatal to his sister. But he also invoked a light moment by talking about KC's favorite memories.

Unexpected family reunion

Saturday's send-off rites were an unexpected reunion of the children of the Speaker and wife Gina from previous marriages.

It brought Philip and Carmen from Gina's first marriage, and Leslie, Miriam and Amy from De Venecia's previous marriage, together with Christopher, KC's older brother.

Only Alexandra Bianca, De Venecia's eldest daughter, failed to make it home from the United States.

Leslie Bevlon, De Venecia's daughter, said 8-year-boy cousin Christian, three-year-old KC is "Tatay, I'm KC and awesome."

"She adored them," she said.

"She was very outspoken, strong-willed," Philip said of his "favorite brother." "I'm happy that now God is KC's big brother. KC, you're really my favorite baby sister and I will miss you forever."

Question of the Week

What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas and the New Year?

Senders of a first (& last) published in Tuesday's **InqBox** *will each receive an "Inquirer T-shirt!"*

Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 333 (Smart).

TAKEOVER/SITUATION officials take over Naia 3 terminal led by Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza on Tuesday

German firm accuses gov't of breaking law on Naia 3

GOVERNMENT troops march toward the main gate of Pasay's Naia 3 airport after a court order allowed the government to take over control of the terminal, idle for the past two years

the line," the company said in a statement. It dismissed the government's offered down payment as unsatisfactory.

The Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) took over Naia 3 hours after getting the go ahead from the Pasay City Regional Trial Court.

In issuing a writ of possession, Judge Bernie Simpao of Branch 117 took "judicial notice" of the fact that the Supreme Court had nullified last year the contracts signed by the Estrada administration and the consortium Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco). The high court said the contracts were declared ineffective by the government.

Legal battle

"The court order takes no doubt that [Naia 3] is a structure for a well-defined public purpose, air transport is important to Philippine economy, particularly the movement of goods and services," Simpao said in his order.

The modern terminal has been left stained since major building work was virtually completed in 2002.

Piatco, which operates the Frankfort airport, reported in documents submitted to the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

The German firm said it wanted a minimum of 200 million euros ($260 million) and would "negotiate" payment details. It also wants compensation of more than P30 million.

At a briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday night shortly after the MIAA took over Naia 3, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was open to allowing a private group headed by the operators of Naia 3 following the expropriation of the idle international passenger terminal.

"We're not ruling that out, everything is possible," Ermita said.

Open within six months

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, one of the business leaders consulted by the government on Naia 3, said the government planned to operate the project for a brief period before bidding out the project, criteria laid in the president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc.

Ermita said the government planned to get Naia 3 in operation within six months at an estimated cost of P3.5 million (P468 million).

But except for the P3 billion dispute arbitrated by Mikel on part of the expropriation, Ermita could not say where the cash-strapped government would get the money to spend for the completion of Naia 3 and its commissioning.

As the government ponders how to come up with the money to compensate Piatco and its partners, business leaders and the tourism industry hailed the government for taking over Naia 3.

Antonio del Rosario Jr., chair of the Philippines US Business Council, said: "Our hope is that by awakening government's takeover of the facility, the expropriation will pass the way for Terminal 3 to be operational in the near future, so that it can begin to serve the needs of Filipino travelers and foreign visitors without further delay."

Del Rosario said that he was also pleased that the expropriation proceedings had come with government assurance that it would pay fair and just compensation for the facility.

About time

Donald Dee, executive vice president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc., said it was about time the government operate Naia 3 because it had waited long enough to reach an amicable settlement before taking over the facility.

The opening of Naia 3 lopped off the list of infrastructure that foreign and local businessmen believe would injure more confidence into the economy.

"We note with approval that the expropriation proceedings came with the assurance from government that it will pay fair and just compensation for the facility as ordered by the Supreme Court," said Guillermo M. Luz, executive director of the Makati Business Club.

Luz urged the government to assure the public that "the facility will be operated and managed according to international best practices by experienced and competent managers."

Political will

Yet of the tourism industry's biggest associations also recommend their full support for the government takeover of Naia 3.

In a letter addressed to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, the private sector associations hailed the government's "strong political will" in the takeover of the facility.

The letter was signed by the heads of the Federation of Tourism Industries of the Philippines, Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines, Philippine Travel Agencies Association, Philippine Hotel Federation, Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Well Sales and Marketing Association, Philippine Tour Operators Association, Association of Car Rental Companies Inc., Fiestaon to Ply Coalition and Manila Japanese Travel Agents and Hoteliers Association.

Tourist arrivals

They said the takeover was timely "in view of the continued increase in international tourist arrivals, especially during the holiday season."

Records of the Department of Tourism showed that as of December this year, tourist arrivals had reached 1.861 million, up 24.2 percent from the same last year. Reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Nonoy Carvajal, Antonio Bernardo and AFP

A horse called 'Tisoy' steals viewers' hearts

who pulled Poe's hearse and "Bonia," who carried Fr. King's saddle and favorite horse.

Tisoy, a white mule horse, around 14 years old, bravely marched for more than three hours, bearing Poe's remains in the midst of a steady crowd.

Earlier, Gabriel Poe told reporters that the family wanted the funeral march to reflect FPJ's love for horses.

'Great Year'

The original plan was for the hearse to be pulled by Poe's favorite race horse "Great Year." Poe owns Great Year's colt "Great Year" is named after the horse's surname and "Great Year" could be equivalent of the huge crowd and the large lights from TV cameras.

Neither Tisoy nor Bonia, however, was owned by Poe. Tisoy was owned from Eduard Rivera Ranch, while Bonia was from the Ritual Funeral Homes.

The two horses which joined the almost four-hour funeral march for Poe yesterday morning are as strangers to high profile funeral marches.

Bonia pulled the hearse during the funeral of popular composer George Canseco.

However, they were apparently bothered by the number of people, many of whom tried to squeeze themselves into the march to get near the hearse. Bonia and driver Rogelio de Leon sold the hearse.

Bonia then also rushed to reach the hearse, while others used firecrackers which scared them, he also added.

Tisoy's handler Albert Dimaculangan said the horse had been drawing a hearse for three years, but never such yesterday's extreme conditions.

Keeping cool

Tisoy was constantly wet and oily showing, as tissue pushing and shoving him and women. He made way for from close. It was "fed" with people who were, in fact, trying to get near it.

But the horse kept its cool.

Tisoy also had to stop every few minutes or so because the crowds started to thicken. This was particularly trying because it was constantly trying to gather momentum. But the handlers would then be endured.

At the Dimasalang Bridge in Manila, Tisoy paused a bit longer than it did during the first time it was cried. There was talk of replacing Tisoy with Bonia, who was walking a few paces ahead and was considerably fresher.

Bonia, which has been in the hearse business for six years, carried only some of those involved in back. But the process of managing and luring Tisoy's reins on Bonia could have complicated dangerous mess.

De Leon, of De Leon, one of the horses who walked beside the hearse, was seen stroking Tisoy and whispering in its ears.

Several times the horses were given rein to drink and sugar to nibble.

Finally, at 6:30 a.m., Tisoy and Bonia reached Manila's South Cemetery. Poe's final destination.

Fan loses slippers, walks 6.5 km barefoot

white confetti and rose petals from a chopper, and red, blue confetti from the windows of high-rise buildings.

From a building on Taft, white and blue balloons were released. Men perched on rooftops at Ayala Avenue waved with bags of flower petals, which they scattered over Poe's coffin as it passed.

There were placards galore—lambasting Mr. Arroyo or declaring undying love for "FPJ."

"The biggest banners said, 'Today any labor at PFJ (FPJ's fight continues)."

Aside from the FPJ bulletproof, another was flying low, on occupants taking videos of the motorcade.

Mayor Lim was said that it was a government chopper, and that he saw a similar one used during the May elections.

On Binondoan, it flew so low that the marchers could feel the gust from its rotor blades. The noise is deafening and was also incredibly loud. Mother's Mike Jr. had, it was the GMA 7 chopper.

* * *

Poe's body arrived at Manila's North Cemetery at around 8:30 a.m. By 10 a.m., the crowd that had massed outside the cemetery was already thinning out.

Asked if he would have joined a march in Mabalacat, if it was easier to Ore, Jun Salazar of Barangay City shook his head.

"It's enough time I've seen him off," Salazar said of Poe. "He was my idol, you know. He made me happy and I came here to pay my respects. That is enough."

* * *

Jolly Buenaide lost her slippers when the crowd surrounds the bier. Buenaide Church because merely as Poe's car was near, being brought out at times.

But the 30-year-old fan thought nothing of it. Barefoot and wearing t-shirt that with a blue ribbon and the letters "FPJ" written on it, Buenaide marched the 6.5 km from church to cemetery.

Buenaide and her companion were not hated to hand and walked to the cemetery to get a chance to get near the carriage bearing the casket.

Asked if she did not find it difficult marching barefoot, she said she had been in. She had tried to buy a new pair but no store was open, so she proceeded as is, she said.

Buenaide also said Ike Seng march would be easy because she had been getting to Poe's make for the past three days. Besides, she said, she was not going to miss his funeral.

* * *

Equally devoted was Carmel Cabrerros, who traveled all the way from Cabanatuan province when she heard that Poe was comatose.

Guerrero, 53, arrived in Manila on the first day of Poe's wake at the Sto. Domingo Church, and stayed overnight in front of the church.

"I only have the urge to take a look at a relative's house, but I went immediately," she said, adding that she had viewed her idol's body for hours.

Guerrero, who held a white rose like other Poe supporters, said her favorite movie was his "Dito sa Puting Buhangin."

* * *

But fans actually risked their lives to catch a last glimpse of his coffin.

"I don't care if I fall down, as long as I see his head," said Eileen Dowdan, 42, who climbed more than 20 others on top of a monument inside the North Cemetery.

Dowdan and the others had waited atop the monument on 14th Street, a few meters away, from the Poe family plot, since 8 a.m.

Into their fourth hour of waiting, the fan was supported by a plywood railing and iron bars on the edges, started shaking and threatened to collapse.

But Dowdan and company insisted on staying put despite warnings from marshals and other spectators on the ground.

Glad to a tattered shirt, soiled shorts, and an "I Love FPJ" band on his right wrist, the Inquirer Poe fans told the marshals to go away. "Kaya na tayong [Even if I fall,]" he shouted.

* * *

Among the fans—whether kids, teens, adults and even senior citizens—also the Inquirer—Ipanaming blanked off areas, climbing trees and avoiding stray bullets and tear-gas, the funeral organizers appealed for calm and urged those who were present for "the President's funeral."

"FPJ would not want anyone to get hurt," banner-child Jesse Nilda Maldaki, a staunch Poe supporter, said over the microphone on a makeshift stage near Poe's tomb, minutes before the body arrived.

But Dowdan, a portfolio driver, sat on one corner of the road and continued his long wait with no food or water.

In the end, both he and the monument survived.

* * *

Dowdan, who volunteered as a marshal for Poe's rates in the May presidential elections, said he had spent a good hour walking from his house on Rizal Street in Tondo to get the best view of his idol's interment.

"I've only seen him all his movies. I even watched him shooting 'Batang Quiapo' and 'Kalibre 45,'" Dowdan said proudly, men and then raising his fist in sadness with the crowd's chanting of his idol's initials.

* * *

As rigorous in joining the FPJ shows was Gemenia Genio, 60, among the few in the funeral to succumb to the heat and exhaustion.

"Even if I die here ... He ran for FPJ, FPJ, FPJ!" Genio chanted in broken sentences as she struggled to catch her breath and symptoms of severe dehydration.

She had arrived at the Sto. Domingo Church from the hinterlands in Iloilo Port Barotac in Negros at 12 a.m. yesterday and walked all the way to the North Cemetery to secure her beloved Poe to his final resting place.

"I haven't eaten. But even if I won't be able to eat. In a day, I will be here to see FPJ buried," said the sobbing Genio, a fish vendor, as she was carried off and, medics of course.

* * *

In between chanting Poe's initials, Genio said she was a loyalist of deposed strongman Ferdinand Marcos and neutral President Joseph Estrada, Poe's best friend.

"I always join whatever side is for goodness. They can't keep me from joining Poe's funeral," she said as she wiped tears for the man she hailed as a hero.

* * *

The determination to see Poe's remains, to be with the man they hailed as a hero, were shared by many.

A 70-year-old man waited patiently for a chance to get a glimpse of Poe—as even just a glimpse of ... outside the gate of the Sto. Domingo Church.

But inside the ground despite being pushed or even shoved by the crowd.

An elderly woman was fainting it difficult to walk without cause, due to the pushing.

Her son said she had insisted on coming to the funeral. They arrived at 3 a.m.—a full two hours before Poe's casket was removed from the church.

* * *

Mercedes Arvello, 58, said she borrowed P2,000 from a neighbor to get to Manila from Bontoc, Samar.

The trip took a close to either people—all fans of "Da King."

Negotiating a thick crowd with her friend Norma Dasalla, 48, Arvello recalled how she was devastated by Poe's demise.

"We all cried upon hearing what had happened," she said as she walked away slowly. "I borrowed some money to come here so we can say goodbye." Lyn A. del Puerto, Steve F. Quintanilla and Leila B. Salaverria

A FUNERAL FIT FOR 'DA KING'

LEGENDS of fans cheer their idol even in death as his funeral convoy arrives at the cemetery

TIME to close up the life of a marvelous eight days. FPJ volunteers do the honors.

MEANWHILE at the Palace, the security takes it easy as the massive funeral is turning out to be peaceful.

The burial of a movie legend may have pushed Filipino idol worship and crowd psychology to a new level

POLITICS couldn't be helped as those supporters believe FPJ was elected president but was "defeated by deceit."

PUBLIC salutation and solidarity with the Luksi'Ving as mourners at the Da to City park.

LIKE the real thing.

ON STANDBY in Pinaklala are security forces just in case violent mass action heads toward Malacañang

MOURNERS wear their sentiments on a banner set up along Espeña Boulevard.

THE LAST night but this senior citizen's grieving has just re-starts

DOJ bares plot to oust Gloria, install Susan, junta

Front page 1 of 2

scom yesterday.

The armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) lowered its red alert status to "alpha alert" following Dan's burial. Shay, the Clintonite heads for address tomorrow 5 p.m. (yesterday)," said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, chief of the AFP's Public Information Office.

The AFP went on white alert after a destabilization move supposed to have been launched by groups from the Left or the Right had been quashed.

Pascual said the plot "probably" fizzled out because of the displacement of some 1,500 soldiers in Mindanao.

Fortress

Malacañang was fortified like a fortress as early as Tuesday night as the Presidential Security Group (PSG) cut all vehicular access to the Palace grounds.

Employees and visitors with vehicles were advised to park their cars at the Malacañang Park on the other side of the Pasig River and to take a thirty-minute ride to the Palace.

The day PDI news realized that its security precautions turned out to be an "overreaction." It eased security restrictions as early as 8 a.m. Fabian Pen's Bantah (Arrest) marched the North Crisscross and started allowing vehicles entry to the Palace grounds.

"We are deeply concerned about a credible intelligence report that there is an imminent conspiracy on the part of some groups to use FPJ's funeral, march and burial to incite the people to turn against their government. I have been briefed on this matter by our intelligence authorities. There is a firm basis for [Gen. Esdras] Tan's order said in a statement.

The alleged plot involved a replay of the past two failed uprisings with opposition supporters teaming up and a general later announcing the military's withdrawal of support from the administration.

Gonzalez said the plotters planned to replace his cabinet with a seven-member junta that would include a "populist selected evangelist" as chair and former President Joseph Estrada.

Reyes would become the "figurehead" of the new government.

Narrowdropper?

However, Gonzalez said that the plotters might have just been using the names of Reyes and Estrada without the two ever knowing about the plot.

"Some plotters drop names to give a semblance of legitimacy to [the group. I do not know if Erap even knows about it," he said.

While the Pre Initially was not to subtend, the plotters allegedly included "former Estrada Cabinet members, his supporters, and 400 people." Estrada said former members of the North Crisscross were involved.

Soriso said the mastermind of previous had no intention to take over the Armed Administration its supporting details of Pre.

"Our intention was very clear from the start and that was to allow his supporters to show him and his them to express their grief and sorrow," Soto said in a phone interview.

Reyes said Gonzalez's claims against the opposition were a "product of pure intelligence" from his people who "willed want to forge a false declaration with him to rule administration."

"They've been reading too much Tom Clancy books," he added.

DOJ wrong

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said Gonzalez was proven wrong. "It was a peaceful march and nobody was trying to agitate anyone," he pointed out.

Pimentel said that the large number of supporters of Poe who joined the funeral march up to the Manila North Cemetery "underscored by his wife/Election for their idol."

For her part, former opposition senatorial candidate Loretta Ann Rosales said there could still be confusion among the people.

"If you would look at this administration, it has's honeymoon period of three years and people expected that with a second term she (President Arroyo) would have already picked up [missed] and recovered the food re-forms but she has not," she said.

Next 48 hours critical

Gonzalez declined to comment when asked about the possible involvement of former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and rebel-ex-Army leader Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim.

"A reliable citizen in the next 48 hours or so [on 31 I think (the plot) has dissipated. Nothing much happened. That did not have a forced march to the Palace unlike before," he said.

He said the government "never espoused" violence to topple during the funeral Mass at the church from Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon Circle. Gonzalez, he said that Malacañang expected the plotters to move after the wake held.

"The idea of the provocateurs was to use the emotions, unleashed by the death of Poe, against the government," he said.

Nice analysis

Up to yesterday afternoon, Gonzalez said he continued to receive intelligence reports on those being monitored by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA).

Gonzalez said that the government never learned about the plot last month's and that the plotters allegedly included that Mr. Arroyo would last in power only up to February or May next year.

He said the planned replacement of government gained momentum when the plotters saw no opposition after Poe's death on Dec. 14.

It was during the arrest's wake that intelligence operatives intercepted Soto's communication between the rebel-ex-Army officers, Gonzalez said.

He said the rebel-ex was in active service and apparently came from the Army while the lawyer was a "former government official who figured prominently" in the opposition after the 1986 People Power Revolution.

'Gabriela Silang'

He said the communication were "coded"—the plotters gave Reyes the codename Gabriela Silang—and the two were "extremely careful" in their talk. However, government information were able to reach upon their plot.

Gonzalez said he was not humiliated a general, who would assume the withdrawal of military support from the government but he added that the plotters might have just been name dropping.

He said there was also no mention of terms Senate Rangers being "contacted" to join the plot but that cited Col. Eusebio Lim, had "identified" some members.

The junior servicemen said Ronald Llamas, leader of the People's Movement Against Tyranny, was also involved in the plot but his group was "too key" because "he knows how to plant surveillance."

Ka Roger

Gonzalez added that another report said that "an event" called to blow People's Army leader Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal on June to exploit Poe's death.

"We have to further verify this but what is important is we know what is going on. We know who they're doing and where they are meeting," Gonzalez said.

He added that the group recently met in Island Restaurant in Quezon City and was even covered by a television crew.

Gonzalez said the situation is now critical during Poe's funeral at Sto. Domingo Church that he was awakened from his sleep when the President called for an emergency meeting at 3 a.m. in Malacañang.

Emergency meeting

Among those present were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and heads of intelligence agencies.

Gonzalez said the President mentioned bits to get legal advice on what could be done should the situation deteriorate after the meeting. Gonzalez said a statement that was aired on cable television, warning Poe supporters not to be carried away by emotions.

"I think inside a the warning that when our democracy is threatened, it is the right and duty of government to uphold the law and honor and protect the people. That definition of the term is the prime duty of government. He shall not allow riots or seditious acts to take the streets," he said.

'Very confident'

Gonzalez said that his troops looked very confident despite the threats and that the morning to go some sleep at 6 a.m.

"We was very confident. When some names of the plotters were mentioned, she was even laughing," Gonzalez said.

Most other alleged persons were also mentioned. The President forward "diamond down tonight," he added. With a report from MSC, Cebu reports B.

Legions grieve over last FPJ blockbuster

Front page 1

was killed by a cardiac arrest Dec. 14.

As the hearse drawers bearing the casket, supported on its four sides by a total of 24 men, moved slowly, Susan's glitz gave FPJ a big, big round of applause!

Burial also threw herself over the coffin of late husband in the pre-dawn funeral Mass at Sto. Domingo Church.

"God, thank you so much for the 16 years you gave us together," she said in her remarks.

The burial of a movie legend must have painted Filipino idol worship and crowd psychology to a new level.

Show of numbers, endurance

As if the massive wake wasn't enough show of numbers and a test of endurance for Poe's fans and political supporters, the five-hour funeral march involved Pinoy festivities in lengths: among other the landslide's historic burials of Ninoy Aquino and former President Ramon Magsaysay.

Old women who would otherwise avoid children for climbing up trash and even street among those jostling for position to get the funeral scene and sing mementoes surrounding Poe's burial site, hoping for a view of the grandeur show in town.

The very same crowds who easily emptied over 9:30 P. shouts at the eighth coin from their close child star Fidel Mahi hath readily ignored his pleas for them to maintain order and "support our president's burial."

Frenzy and humor

It also at those hectic moments Nancy Binay also fueled the crowd's energy in what was supposedly a somber religious ritual.

A cursory FPJ fan, who revised vocabulary to use his idol's coffin, said: "It's OK, FPJ! Just look at the airplanes (airports and airwaves)" gathered around.

After Poe's family and closest friends left, the mass crowd moved in, as it devoured its rightful share over the week of "Dubya."

Pictures mailed in they issued flowers. Men felt the fresh damp souvenir of the tomb on their palms.

In the most circular burial list, FPJ lay in the extreme eastern side about three feet from actor-brother Andy Poe, who died in 1995. To Andy's left lay their parents Fernando Sr. and his wife.

Several injured

A chopper overhead mashed with large letters "FPJ" dropped blue confetti and white petals.

The chopper was piloted by Jude Miranda, son of Poe's close friend, deposed President Joseph Estrada, arrived from to Makati.

Police estimates of the crowd of mourners, including those who lined the streets, topped from "tens of thousands" to 2,000,000, according to foreign news agencies.

One of the murderers, Juanita Garcia, 53, was shot at the 1980 depositor funeral.

"The attendees were huge morons. Then, the people were largely quiet and are were just sympathizing. Today, we really love him (FPJ)," she said.

Lanbo Pineda, 34, was watching from a street when Aquino's coffin passed by. Yesterday, he said their sleep to be near his idol.

"At Ninoy's funeral, many people were sad," he said. Then, we are like ordinary folk," he said.

At the crush at the cemetery, two people were hurt when they fell from a monument. They suffered fractured bones and contusions. Three people, including two women, fainted due to the heat.

Cheers and hawk

Mourners erupted in cheers and howls at the sight of actors, actresses and politicians, as though they were watching a shooting of a Poe movie.

Brothers Joggy and Jude Estrada and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, sons of Joseph Estrada, and Sen. Jamby Madrigal, sons of Poe's close friend and deposed President Estrada, received the wildest cheers.

Bashing GMA

Also around were former Senators Loren Legarda and Vicente Sotto III, Sorsogon Gov. Marcos and her brother Gov. Jesse Robredo, Quezon City Rep. Vincent Crisologo, Poe's spokesperson Jinggoy Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Bulacan Rep. Teodoro Bonoan, and former Manila Mayor Mel Lopez.

Some of Poe's supporters lambasted Ms. Arroyo, whom they accused of rigging their idol of the presidency in the May elections.

"Hamunda lupa! Kalamidad ito! (Attack out! The devil will be on you!)," the late actor Ainay Bueno encouraged the ground hogs a makeshift stage beside the Poe family plot.

A woman grabbed the microphone from Nilo Mallorca and burned Ms. Arroyo, calling her "a cheat!" and shouting: "FPJ is the true president."

Along the route of the 4.1-km funeral march, the young, the old and the militant city poor cheered and cried and marched their way to catch a last glimpse of the coffin of their idol.

Kalinga, too

At the cemetery many took off their shoes and barefoot—they said more easily squeeze into the dark crowd. Others, more barefoot. (Related story on Page A2.)

Just for Poe's well-dressed supporters from politics and show business, many among the ordinary folk came in faded, old, tattered, child's and shorts. Their feet disheveled.

Children clinging to their parents were no underpayments. Some were never saved from the waist up.

But Kalinga natives from Bangko dressed up in G-strings. They have got low-back 501 shirts.

The windy Orange were reminiscent of the crowd that stormed Malacañang in 2001 after Estrada was ousted from power.

Police overwhelmed

The force of 300 cops and 600 volunteer marshals deployed at the extremely tensest many as thousands of Poe supporters began charging toward the Poe family plot after his hearse arrived.

Others ran over a barricade supposed to separate the crowd from the inside and close friends of the actor.

The ensuing chaos kept Legarda, the Binay men and others away from the burial ceremonies.

Marshals had to shove the chain crowd to allow Bueno and other relatives to get to the family plot. Family friends tried to keep the commotion underarched but many people shouted and shoved.

Security nightmare

"It's really a security nightmare," Inocencio organizer Cynthia Colet said. "People are just popping out of everywhere—even if we thought we had already blocked all possible entrances."

Police, as well built man with dyed blond hair but his cool and pushed three unruly male members blocking his path toward the rest of need assistance.

Into the hot standing near an area outside, sweated mildly for Poe's relatives and friends nearly collapsed in the thick atmosphere.

Frustrated, many left the cemetery without catching a glimpse of Poe's casket. Some waited for several six tokens one installed in security measures, crowded with the thought that they were part of history.

All the hum and trembling of our government have been put to bar because we have been almost rocked to the end spirit of justice, love and mercy, and courage. And Poe's are definitely etched in the life of FPJ," Valter Sumaoy said as he left the cemetery.

Brothers said that Bueno succumbed to the intense heat and had to be carried to his car during the burial rites, but she returned as Poe's coffin was placed in the tomb. With reports from Tj Burgonia, Jaime A. del Puerto and Micaela Pajar

A BIG hand from the little lady: President Arroyo waves with the soldier's who had received Malacañang during the Poe funeral and tearfully applauds stance for their vigilance and a job well done. EDDIE MALECDAN

IN THE KNOW

By the PDI Research

29 VIPs final place of rest, Richardo Poe Jr. lies in the company of heroes, presidents, senators, national artists and other Filipinos who were also celebrated and loved by a grateful country.

The list begins: Manila Bay's Luneta Park has been a favorite resting place of famous Filipinos. Its history as a burial place dates back to 1896, long before **prime ministerial parks began to reach** towns in Metro Manila.

Among the personalities laid to rest at the Manila Cemetery are:

1. President Ramon Magsaysay
2. President Manuel Roxas
3. Presidents Manuel Quezon (his remains were later transferred to the Quezon Memorial Circle)
4. President Sergio Osmeña Sr.
5. Sen. Claro M. Recto
6. Benito Legarda y Susano

7. Mayor Asencio Lacson
8. Mayor Tomas A. Morato (Quezon City's first mayor)
9. Joaquin "Chino" Roces
10. Jose Garcia de Jesus a.k.a. "Dancing Master"
11. Amado V. Hernandez and dancer Ate Bunny
12. Manuel Barlaan
13. The Nakpil-Bautistas like Dr. Jovita Ramirez Ide, Juan Nakpil, Pedro Nakpil and wife Gregoria de Jesus
14. Lourdes Tisoncy Arroyo, mother in-law of President Macapagal-Arroyo
15. The Elizaldes
16. The Antonio Thomasites
17. Pio del Pilar
18. World boxing champion Pancho Villa
19. Diosdado Jaguson (J Bengan)

Related story: Page A2

Poe's memory, face live on in death mask

Front page 1

other projects, like producing movies and carrying Poe's face.

Alfonso told the hostess that there were no immediate plans yet on how the mold would be used, saying he would keep it in the meantime "just for reference."

The molding began about 2 a.m. yesterday and took more than 30 minutes to finish, delaying the scheduled final interceding Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church.

For the procedure, the coffin had to be opened. Marshals were strict and prohibited entertainers and photographers from shooting pictures while Alfonso worked.

Retouching FPJ

During the process, Alfonso carefully applied a material, called Plaster of Paris (which thickens like cement once mixed with water), on top of the actor's face to get the "impression of his face," the sculptor said.

Poe's face had to be smoothed after the procedure because parts of his makeup were erased.

Alfonso said he would "prettify" Poe's death mask in fiberglass.

Napoleon Bonaparte, too

A death mask is a common practice in honoring "great men," Alfonso said. The wax does, too, to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Asked about proposals to elect Poe posthumously the cracks of National Artists, Alfonso said that, based on the actor's contribution to the film industry, the was "more of those who are qualified."

"I look forward to him being named as National hero," he said.

Ancient beliefs

In the ancient world, a death mask—which is an exact model of the face of a dead person cast in plaster, wax or metal from a mold taken from the corpse—played an important part in funerary beliefs and practices.

A dead mask was used to cover the face of corpse to protect the body from evil spirits while it lay in state, according to one belief. Later, the mask was placed on the outside of the person's house where it was created with hamita or his heart day.

The mask was also carried in the funeral procession of the dead mask's descendants.

In ancient Egypt, people believed that immortality depended largely on the preservation of the personality of the deceased body.

Wisdom, strength, power

The use of masks seeks to preserve the personality of the dead, especially if the deceased possessed great wisdom, physical strength or power. The invention of funerary masks in some cultures served this purpose.

Other funerary practices with death masks are Bordeaux, Dutch and Greek.

Two funerals, one message: Dawn of new life

Front page 1

"The first time that a massive human outpouring was seen was during Ninoy's interment. (This is) just about the second time. The magnitude [of the love] was not great as to overshadow (the first), but definitely, Ninoy's (funeral) was the one to which our nation people turned to for support's funeral.

Pimentel, inspirated four times by the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos during football law, said that while Aquino and Poe belonged to two different worlds and generations, their message of hope was "one and the same."

"Ninoy came off dying to tell the people that even if he had to sacrifice his life, a better nation could still come. And FPJ's message is, The dawn of a better life is coming," Pimentel said.

'His historical antecedent'

"Their optimism arose from the fact that the Filipino is worth dying for," he said.

Pimentel observed that Poe was "not as set body advocates as Ninoy".

"Nevertheless," he said, "the message came loud and clear that the people will continue to uphold the rule of law, things will turn out right in the end for the people."

But Sen. Edgardo Angara, who joined Poe's family during the interceding rites, refused to equate his funeral with our historical antecedent.

"Nothing is comparable to this. It is a unique event because here, a man who died of natural causes has moved tens of thousands of people to mourning," said Angara, who had served as Poe's chief political adviser.

Comparisons

Those who had witnessed the two wakes at the Sto. Domingo Church said the queues at Poe's make were considerably longer.

"I was at Ninoy's wake," said Lynda Quitano of Baguio City. "At the time, it only took up 30 minutes to see his body after we got out of a taxi. But now, we had to wait for hours. We would not have gotten in if we were not so near sisters."

The organizers of Poe's wake had created a special line for senior citizens and the disabled.

Dave Aquino's younger sister, former Sen. Tessie Aquino Oreta, said the funeral march for the late had apparently drawn more people.

This was her explanation: "The population is bigger now compared to (that in Ninoy's) time. Also, FPJ was an actor. He was an actor, and that was a drawing power in itself. You have the combination of being a cultural icon and a politician," Oreta said.

Asked to compare the atmosphere then and now, Oreta, who attended yesterday from the Sto. Domingo Church to the Holy Cemetery with her Ami-Ninoy Rep. Eleanor Mukay Aquino Jimenez and other leaders of the opposition, said people were visibly angry during Aquino's funeral.

The hero-seas, albeit all, filled by an assassin's bullets, while Poe died a natural death.

"But the anger I sensed in Ninoy's funeral took quite some time to form," Oreta said. "This is more immediate. The anger here is immediately felt."

Both symbols

If the two funerals can be compared, it's because Poe and Aquino were both symbols, said Walter Bocjo, 66, a property operator and driver from Quezon City.

According to Bocjo, who was present at both events, Aquino stood for the people's opposition to Ferdinand Marcos' iron rule. Poe, on the other hand, stood as a hero of the masses and as the symbol of a victim of questionable elections.

"If people could see an Old dad there were the many people who attended the burial, they may wonder. Why did he lose? Maybe something did happen," Bocjo said. But he also admitted, added the possibility that not all who attended the funeral had voted for the actor.

Bocjo said the people who joined Aquino's funeral march were very emotional: "Some is but confused (Many) everyone was crying."

Political and show biz

He said even the smaller moment in the march became sign posted to the people marching to the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque.

On the other hand, Bocjo said, there were hardly any tears during Poe's funeral march. Also, the sun was burning during the event, and the crowd turned emotional only when Poe's casket reached the family plot at the North Cemetery in Manila.

Bocjo said he appreciate he more popular than Aquino, which was only he reported more people to turn up for the actor's funeral.

"Even children know who FPJ is. Only the older people were aware of who Ninoy was," he said.

He also observed that Aquino's funeral was mainly a political one, while Poe's was both a political and a show biz event.

Love, resentment

Pimentel expressed the hope that as the mourning wound down, the message of Poe and Aquino would "sink deeper in the hearts of Filipinos."

He said that the movement of both funerals had manifested "love" for either man and "resentment at the present they thought were responsible for the death of their leaders."

In the case of Ninoy, the object of hatred was Marcos; in the case of FPJ, the object of ridicule is (President) Gloria [Macapagal-Arroyo]," he said.

According to Pimentel, the 'EDSA' revolution was to "the manifestation of grief and love for their fallen idols" and the conditions prevailing in either instance.

Power tactics

In Ninoy's time, the conditions were not five compared to the present set-up, he said, adding:

"But, of course, there was human mass yesterday (when) presented more people from the premises as (in the funeral march on Ayala (Boys)) power tactic such as (warning of) the possible eruption of violence, which somehow discouraged others to join the march."

The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Dueso

Mosul bomb attack kills 18 GIs, 4 Iraqis

MOSUL, Iraq—A guerrilla attack on a rented dining hall at a US base in Iraq killed 18 American soldiers and four Iraqis in one of the deadliest strikes on Americans since last year's war to oust Saddam Hussein.

US officials initially said a number of rocket and mortar rounds were fired at the base in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday, but a militant group claimed a suicide bomber was behind the attack, in which a further 72 people were wounded.

"A suicide bomber has not been ruled out," a US army official in Iraq later told Washington.

Giving the latest in a confusing series of casualty updates, the military in Baghdad said 14 US soldiers, four American civilians and four Iraqi security force members were killed.

Fifty-one of the wounded were US military personnel. Of the 72 hurt, 43 were still being treated.

A spokesperson in Mosul said it could take days before a clear picture emerged of what happened and who was killed.

"There's some tedious forensic work to be done. It could be a couple of days," said Capt. Phil Ludvigson, who said it was not clear what had caused the explosion. "Bombers, mortars or any number of things could have caused it."

US President George W. Bush, who reacted on Monday that guerrilla bombers were taking a toll, sent his condolences to the families. He called Sting "a vital mission for peace."

"I know a free Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world," said Bush, who paid a Christmas visit to families of wounded soldiers as a poll showed most Americans now believed the war was not worth fighting.

The attack was a reminder of the threat guerrillas pose, as weeks after US troops stormed Fallujah to quell a violent Sunni insurgency before Iraq holds its national elections on Jan. 30.

Mosul residents said US forces exacted full use of the city on Wednesday, including bridges crossing the Tigris river, and carried out raids in a hunt for suspects behind the attack.

"It was a tragic event, but it will not deter us from our mission," said Sgt. Steve Valley, a US spokesperson in Baghdad. "We're all here with the same purpose of ridding this country of these armed thugs and building a democracy."

The worst single US military death toll since the war was 17 when two helicopters came down in blood last year.

The new Mosul attack came as British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a surprise visit to Baghdad, vowing government would last until the elections would go ahead on time. Reuters

US SOLDIERS used to the wounded after an insurgent mortar attack on a dining facility during Iraq/Mosul/FOB Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 21

2 reporters held for 4 months freed

PHILIPPOT, right, and Chesnot in an undated photo

PARIS—Two French journalists were heading home in France on Wednesday after the end of a four-month hostage ordeal in Iraq which left many questions and questions about the government's handling of the crisis.

President Jacques Chirac broke off a Christmas vacation in Morocco and returned to France to record an address hailing the release of Georges Malbrunot, 41, and Christian Chesnot, 37, who were seized by Islamic militants on Aug. 20.

Details of their release in Iraq on Tuesday remained sketchy. It was not clear whether the government had made any deal with the kidnappers, and opposition leaders said it would be time have to explain how it had handled the crisis.

"It seems that we've been let out well by their captors," Anne-Marie Charrier, the sister of one of the journalists, told RTL radio. "We know only that they are both okay."

"It's a very beautiful Christmas present, the most beautiful Christmas present you could have," Chesnot's brother Thierry told reporters.

Chirac, whose table-set was set to be broadcast later in the day, breathed a sigh of relief as France united in celebration.

But he will have to explain why it took so long to secure such apparent the US-led war in Iraq, and says it has strong ties in the Middle East, as long to secure the release.

"When the time is right, the time for explanations will come," said Francois Hollande, leader of the opposition Socialist Party.

"My main ask for explanations about all stages of their detention. Now their freedom has been secured, informing parliament about all the conditions of how the discussions have unfolded since August is the least thing that can be done." Reuters

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Pfizer says study backs Celebrex safety

WASHINGTON (AP)—Pfizer Inc. said yesterday a National Institutes of Health study of Alzheimer's patients found that its Celebrex arthritis drug carries no increased cardiovascular risk for elderly.

Pfizer's painkiller came under the last week when it was found to carry a higher risk of heart complications in a study of its use to prevent patients.

The drug is in the same class as Merck & Co. Inc.'s Vioxx, which was recalled earlier this year because it increased heart risks.

Pfizer said the NIH study's results are consistent with a large body of evidence supporting the cardiovascular safety of celebrex.

"This is important new information that should be considered by doctors and patients as they evaluate the various treatments for arthritis and pain," said Scott Mitchell, Pfizer chief medical.

"Millions of people simply can't get through their days with out pain relief. That's why all the emerging information about arthritis medicine—prescription and over-the-counter—must be fully evaluated by the US Food and Drug Administration and other regulatory authorities," he added.

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Washington seeking talks with Iran

TEHRAN—Washington wants to hold direct talks with Tehran, with which it broke in 24 years ago, to discuss a number of issues including the Islamic state's nuclear program, a senior American envoy in Kabul said on Tuesday.

Hussein Mousavian, one of Iran's chief nuclear negotiators, also said Iran had no objections to European Union efforts to resolve Washington's longstanding dispute over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

But a Western diplomat in Tehran said talk of Washington holding direct dialogue with Tehran was premature.

EU officials privately acknowledge that their efforts to persuade Tehran to give up uranium enrichment, such as uranium enrichment, have little chance of success without full US support and involvement in the talks.

"The United States wants negotiations with Iran and definitely doesn't like having a mediator (otherwise, even) if the Europeans want to mediate," the official IRNA news agency quoted Mousavian as saying.

"But they are also sympathetic and sometimes talks which cover all disputed issues," he said.

US and Iranian officials have held occasional talks in the past on specific issues such as Afghanistan and Iraq, but talks broke down last year when Washington accused Iran of providing shelter for al-Qaeda members behind bombings in Saudi Arabia.

"The Europeans have launched massive efforts to bring the United States into the nuclear negotiations," said Mousavian, who is secretary of the foreign policy committee on Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

"We have no objection to the Americans joining the Europeans in this process," he added.

Washington accuses Iran of trying to make atomic arms under the cover of a civil nuclear energy program. Iran denies this.

"If the Americans want to hamper the Iran-EU cooperation, they can be effective and no one can deny it ... US interests with Europe in this process is important from one point of view, nevertheless our partners in Europe are America," Mousavian said.

"I don't expect the possibility of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States, but I cannot predict the future."

The Western diplomat in Tehran said the EU "has been very clear that negotiations would have a much bigger chance of success if the Americans put their shoulder behind it."

But he said skepticism remained high in Washington that Iran was negotiating in good faith rather than trying to buy time to continue with a nuclear arms drive at a later stage.

"We're a long way from the point where talking is not at the negotiating table," he said.

US fears that Iran has overcome its ef getting lay a quest for atomic bombs are likely to have been exacerbated on Tuesday by reports from Vienna-based diplomats that Iran is continuing to ready large amounts of uranium for enrichment.

Uranium enrichment is a process that can be used to make fuel for nuclear power stations so as to make atomic warheads.

"The Iranians have decided to continue UF4 (uranium tetrafluoride) production until the end of February," a diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Two other diplomats in Vienna, where the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is based, confirmed this.

UF4 is the precursor to uranium hexafluoride (UF6), the gas that is fed into centrifuges.

Iran recently pledged to freeze all activities linked to uranium enrichment as a confidence-building gesture. Reuters

Teenage sex video sparks furor in India

NEW DELHI—What started as an email between two teenage schoolchildren has turned into a major scandal in India. Sex crushed before consecutive heads and caused serious questions about parenting and schoolchildren.

Within a 10-year-old (MMS) schoolboy used his phone camera to film his girlfriend performing oral sex on him, he could scarcely have imagined. I would not only lead to his arrest but would also provoke intense national and international debate.

The chain of events has shocked traditional-bound India, the land which brought the world the Kama Sutra but where cheek-days couples do not even hold hands in public.

Police were alerted after the film clip ended up on the Internet auction site Baazee.com, owned by US giant eBay, and alerted its chief, an American citizen.

New questions about sex, privacy, technology and the legal system are being asked.

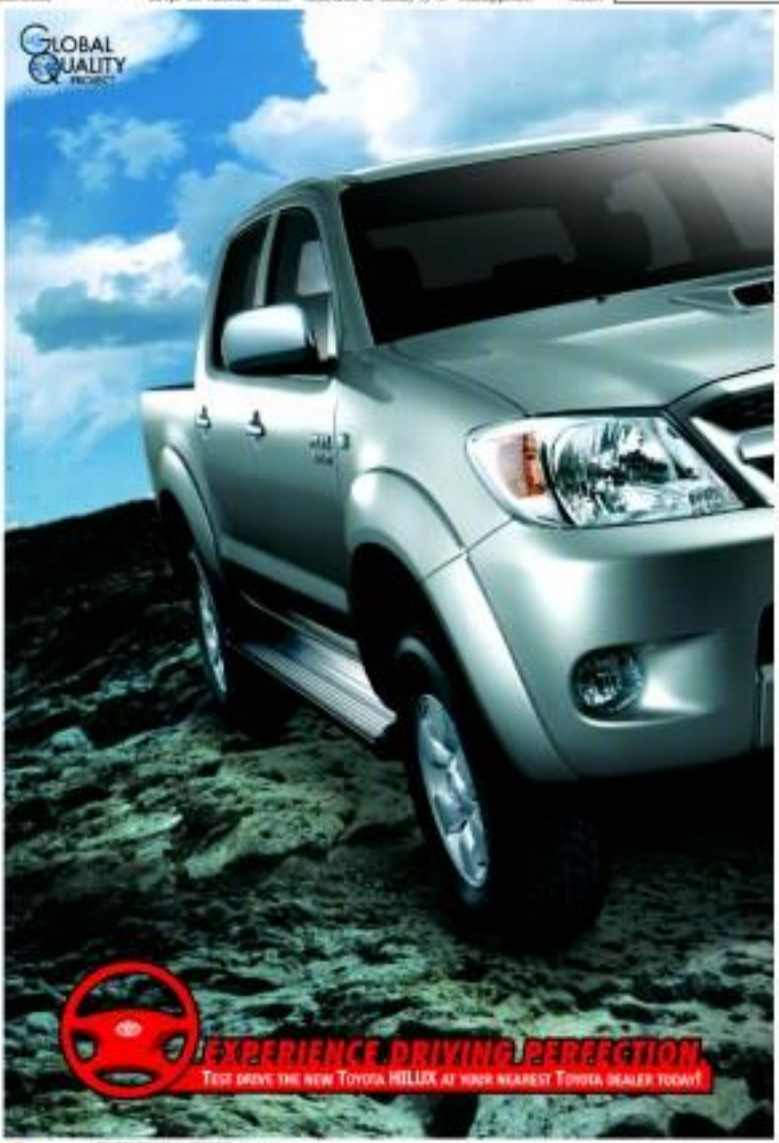
"We have been a very closed society and although sex has been around, it was always under the carpet so far," said Radhika Sharma, a mother of two teenage girls. "So this is certainly a disturbance under up-roll."

The story surfaced a little over a month ago when the teenagers were expelled from a prestigious Delhi school after he was caught circulating the video, shot on his mobile phone camera.

Soon the images were circulating on the thriving underground porn market and selling on disc for as little as a dollar.

A 23-year-old student from a top engineering college then allegedly got in on the act, posting the clip up for sale on a popular online auction site. He used e-mail and the name for the front pages of India's newspapers. The student, the schoolboy and the owner of the Internet site were all arrested.

The scandal is just one of many controversies to erupt recently that signal that India's conservative views—inspired by creators of Western media and under British colonial rule—may be fading under the impact of Western influences and a refreshingly confident, open generation. Reuters



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WHITE CHRISTMAS IN CHINA Cyclists ride along a quiet snow-lined street one typical mid Beijing near the east gate of the Forbidden City Dec. 22, as the first snow of the winter hit the capital. More snow is forecast in the coming days, with chances high that many parts of China will enjoy a White Christmas. AFP

Hostage-takers steal $39M from Northern Ireland bank

BELFAST...A gang held the families of two Northern Ireland bank officials hostage for 24 hours before stealing about $39 million in one of Britain's biggest robberies, police said on Tuesday.

The employees were forced to hand over the money from a cash center at the headquarters of Northern Bank in central Belfast after close of business on Monday by raiders who had robbed seven their homes on Tuesday night.

Northern Bank is Northern Ireland's largest retail bank and is owned by Montreal-Australia Bank.

"Two families have suffered great trauma as a result of the actions of these criminals," Northern Ireland's Assistant Chief Constable Sam Hamilton told reporters.

Police said they were investigating whether one of Northern Ireland's paramilitary groups, which remain heavily involved in crime despite observing ceasefires in the province's long-running sectarian conflict, had been involved in the raid.

"Clearly this is a well-organized crime, there's absolutely no doubt about that," said Hamilton.

"Whether it is in any way associated with paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, we haven't sufficient information for us to make any assessment on that at present."

Britain's biggest robbery was a 1987 break-in of a safe deposit center in London when 40 million pounds was taken. In 1983, 26 million pounds was taken in a raid on a Britain-Rite bank at London's Heathrow airport.

National Australia Bank said in a statement to the Australian Stock Exchange about 10 million pounds was stolen.

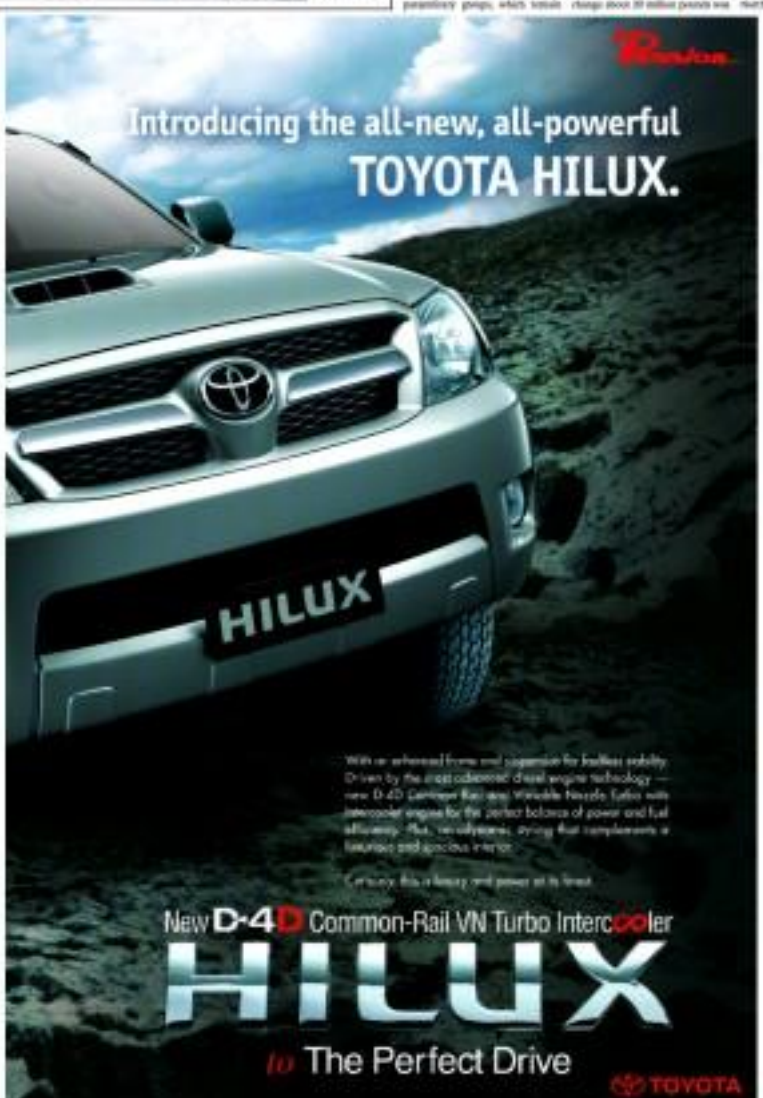
"The theft is executed by well-known antics, said an early, Protestant paramilitary frank... will have the support of any losses arising from the theft," it said.

Northern Bank has 105 branches in the British-ruled province.

Earlier this month, Denmark's Danske Bank agreed to buy Northern Bank and Dublin-based Irish rival Irish Civil Financial Australia Bank the 1.6-4 billion Danish crowns ($1.87 billion).

The theft was not expected to have any material impact on the sale of the two banks on Dunday, National Australia bank said.

"Most importantly, all staff involved in the theft are safe and are receiving appropriate care and support by Northern Bank and the police in Northern Ireland," it said. Reuters



Darfur peace talks suspended

ABUJA—Sudan's government and Darfur rebels suspended talks aimed at ending fighting in the Darfur region on Tuesday and the African Union urged both sides to stop fighting to allow negotiations to resume in January.

The break up of peace talks in the Nigerian capital Abuja, brokered by the African Union, left the region in turmoil with the United Nations estimating that 70,000 people have died in the conflict and 1.5 million have been forced from their homes.

The talks will be formally closed to the media on December 23 and will resume sometime in January if the Darfur peacekeeping mission can be established, the AU said in a statement.

"We will be engaging with the secretary general on what steps the Security Council might take," US representative Susan Rice, the ambassador-designate to the United Nations, said.

"I also think it might be time for him to actually personally use the influence of his office to put pressure on the parties," Rice added, adding that in fact we spoken to Annan about it. The secretary general's position remained in new agreements for humanitarian access.

The head of the Sudan government delegation, Mahgoub al-Khalifa said talks had reached a "reasonable" and said we are all committed to the talks again."

He added that Sudan had accepted in principle Obasanjo's proposals to observe the ceasefire by sending troops back to positions held at the time the accord was signed. Rebels had already pledged to observe the ceasefire, but the government insisted that it would not withdraw its troops from areas it controlled.

ISSN 0116-2442 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Vol. XXVI, No. 33

OPINION

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Spectacle

FROM A DISTANCE, the throngs that turned out to bury Fernando Poe Jr. appeared what pragmaticists said they would be—not only ardent but also adulatory and noteworthy for endurance. In fact, they made for a spectacle, the sort that gives foreign (and therefore culturally different) observers pause, so for an epic movie, the sort that sweeps the viewer along as

EDITORIALS

frame upon breathless frame unveils, sound and action melding in raging movement.

Raging but, because of disparate persuasions, conducive to petering out. And also, because ideologically unorganized, lacking the force of an idea whose time has come. Synthesizers must certainly be grateful that the tidal wave of grief parsimoniously incoming for the past days descended with a weight not much more than the metaphorical extended sigh. But then the bereaved family as represented by Poe's widow had consistently admirably, refused to bite the bait style dangled by adversaries, at the same time maintaining a frosty hauteur toward which Malacañang could only be diffident. (Imagine what could have been if Imaza Bones behaved otherwise.)

Gazing about for comparisons, mourners and assorted politicians hark back to the 1983 funeral march that escorted the assassinated Benigno S. Aquino Jr. to his grave—a swollen river of movement made seamless by a unity of purpose: to defy Ferdinand Marcos; to show, despite the overarching terrorism of his dictatorship, the public outrage was now breaching the banks; to declare that enough was enough. Without intending to galvanize the perfected quality of yesterday's march, there is no parallel point on which to nominate but the general thread of not now running through it.

To be sure, the memory of Poe's coffin on a carriage pulled by a horse—part of the spectacle, apparently in keeping with the now mythical image of "Da King" as a horseman, but now imbued with a certain measure of insensitivity considering the terrible effort that the horse was compelled to make—is now part of the national imagination, as is the memory of the flatbed truck bearing Aquino's coffin. But unfortunately, the crowdies who yesterday comported themselves solely as voiceless thronging fours (toes and trampling plants and niches), as much moved by a morbid curiosity as wholehearted), cuggled for the TV cameras, and distracted the organizers' assiduous planning and grappled as brazenly for space as for whatever-or giveaways they could grasp—even those who, incredibly, were seen waving the Stars and Stripes in the manner of activists waving the red flags of protest—took away from the proceedings what could have been a unifying theme: the supposed widespread anger at the alleged cheating that robbed Poe of the presidency. (Then again, why shouldn't they wave the Stars and Stripes? Even the mighty US government sent condolences to the Poes.)

Panic

IT WOULD SEEM then that Malacañang had switched to panic mode, and President Macapagal-Arroyo and her coterie of advisers were caught in the throes of overreaction. How toolegant: Imagine the Commander in Chief marking the 60th anniversary of the Armed Forces on Tuesday, not on the grounds of Camp Aguinaldo where she could have regally imaged the line and inspected her troops, but in the fortress also known as the Palace. And imagine her bidding her soldiers to "be by my side." She she were choosing a love song in duets, as though they were not obliged to do so.

This unseemly behavior is entirely of a piece with the flurry of conciliatory gestures that Malacañang had made since news broke that the principal contender to Ms Arroyo's post had given up his ghost. Politely rebuffed by Poe family members in its amazing efforts to get on their good side, Malacañang had turned tail and proceeded to weave itself silly with the man's ghost. Is this any way for a strong republic to proceed?

Now the question arises as to why the apparent panic in Malacañang reached such surprising proportions ("very strict" inspections and access controls, "upgraded" security arrangements, "additional troops," not to mention forcing Palace employees by barge). Why the defensive stance toward the supposed anger over its alleged dirty tricks during the presidential election? What is it hiding?

Revisiting Christmases past

THE CRIME STUNNED bigger in the church door wouldn't budge. Rites de Galle had just ended. It delayed, I'd miss the overbooked flight for Bangkok, for a "tourist law refugee." Thailand was my United Nations duty station for 17 years. Kids were flying in from US schools to join us for Christmas.

Shifting the heaviest cast, the biggest portrait, "Don't you remember me?" flowing my blind look in my eyes, he murmured: "We were classmates in grade school. I am Cornelio..."

Memory swooped away the set riddles, the din and its hermetic years. He had played prominent roles in my childhood years. He had played prominent roles in my childhood years. He had played prominent roles in my childhood

KC sent off with balloons and butterflies

NOW Speaker Jose de Venecia and wife Gina, the world's two best to wipe with the sudden death of their daughter Kc, who was plucked from life at the tender age of 20 by a sickness five has got and much resilience. Over the past five days, hundreds of people from all walks of life, young and even almost separated into the funerals de San Antonio in Forbes Park to condole with the De Venecias in their hour of grief, but having go of Kc and her family in their prayers. Together with Gina, Eddie Villanueva and Sonny Ramirez—and friends from defunct President Macapagal Arroyo and former President Aquino—arrived there today go of Kc and entered her body to the crypt.

* * *

Yesterday morning, the grieving family joined by relatives and friends led by Gina and the First Gentleman, Vice President Noli de Castro and President Gloria and Mr. Mike Arroyo, also just that. After the funeral Mass concelebrated by Bishop Antonio Tobias of Novaliches, Hugo, Nico Bautista, Augusto Lukas and Arnie Bautista, and the Rev. Fr. Jerry Orbos, the hearse, carriages from family and friends that were like a sorting-off of sorts. Then everyone was ushered outside into the gardens where photos of Kc in her different stages of life were displayed. As the singing by Lea Salonga and Gemma of "Happiness," Kc's favorite song, she was "freed up" as leaves with the symbolic gesture of the release, and hundreds of butterflies were released into the sky. This was followed by the release of 500 butterflies into the trees, creating Psalm 23:4: "I said, Oh that I had the wings... I would fly away, and be at rest." "Goodbye, Kc, goodbye," said the crowd which then sang "Lupang Hinirang." By then, the eyes were dry. Then the Immediate family left to bring the ash despot in two pots—oh, that hurt KC's sister—to the crypt below the church. As Gloria told relatives and friends later:

"Many I made my goodbyes to Kc," and the left better. The sameness of grief lifted from her face and RM's, as the peace brought about by the acceptance of God's will for Kc's life settled upon them.

The beautiful church and garden environment for Kc's send-off to heaven were orchestrated by Gina's sisters, Marilita Macoda,

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

Cloma Angeli and Bernhay Salgado, Gina's daughter Carissa Cruz and friend Aryanne Albert. Her brother-law were supplied by Manhattan's son, Ed mund Macoda, other longtime friends and Gina's hobby but lately as a professor. Her did a true cordly honor for his mom and for Camp John Hay and is doing out in Boracay).

* * *

In his eulogy for Speaker and many retired had asked him and Gina to let Kc "fly like a bird on eagles' wings" as she ate join their departed relatives in the great beyond. Believing fully to give two fountain of Kc and "not bring" (PP:3, *ESV* committed a blooper by listing his Kc year-old mother in law, Asuncion Vera Perez, among the departed relatives, but not Gina quickly corrected it, as everybody laughed and said that Lola Jun Gina is very cared," said someone, but it helped break the emotion inside the church.

* * *

JDV recalled that he has been through many ordeals in his life, including his Binational debacle in the Middle East earlier last '70s, where he had to secure almost getting 1,000 ex-workers out of Kuwait, Iraq, and his love for three general elevations in 1998. "But nothing can compare to the grief of losing a daughter so young and so unaffected," he said, noting their tragic helplessness in reconciling to an order was unfathomed by mortals and beyond by them. What troubles *JDV*, however, was the revelation of Fr. Ronnie Cuepio of San Beato School that a week before the final, KC made a personal confession to him. Then, Cuepio said the priest, "your daughter is in heaven now."

* * *

Not such is life's mystery that out of tragedy

Jose and Gina's 18-year-old son, Quimbee, proved to was a chip off the old block by completing his dinner, "my boy is already a man," Gina said, while Joseph, the middle son, is a fighter just like her," in an easy contemplation style. Chris revealed that he and KC had made a pact to go to Las Vegas for her 21st birthday and hear all their winnings over here alone, the reason to be KC's best friend at International School, a 10th Grade student named Harvey Mercado, tearfully recalled their crazy escapades and how he and KC would always exhort Sir Thursday, just hours before she died.

* * *

The 63-based bride to Senator Ramon, *JDV* and Gina's 30th year marriage, is one of the interesting circumstances of the Je dencias "blended family" which was really composed of three separate families. If *JDV* is the trustee of the first wife and Gina the co per-pounder, he obviously got his training in his complex family circumstance. KC's older half-sister, Felipe Cruz III, talked about how his favorite baby sister must now be changing the way things are done.

Actress Iris Santos, one of KC's siblings in baptism, admitted that she had not been such a good sibling to KC over the years in her career and all. But, nonetheless, the night of KC's departure had to Christmas gift just before the fat hour. She also revealed how she spoke on the phone with Gina de Venecia that night and the latter told her, "Ninang, ang pinakamahirap sa akin promised kc, that now that she's no longer around to bring joy to her parents, she could still be an help their heart to smile again.

* * *

Her aunt Gina, who is KC's ninang in baptism, admitted that she had not been such a good ninang to KC over the years in her career and all. But, nonetheless, the night of KC's departure had to Christmas gift just before the fat hour. She also revealed how she spoke on the phone with Gina de Venecia that night and the latter told her, "Ninang, ang pinakamahirap sa akin promised kc, that now that she's no longer around to bring joy to her parents, she could still be an help their heart to smile again.

* * *

Her uncle is MS's mystery that out of tragedy

From an old Christmas story

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"ARE you cured?" asked his wife when Jose came in the door. Concha handed the general a plastic bag. "Use up on, okay? I mean, it's safer." He was already in bed.

"Of course," he assured his wife, "but tell the general I was suddenly summoned to headquarters and will be back before midnight. Tell my mama... There'll understand. I'm sure many of them will still be up playing mah-jong." He asked Concha for his daughter, but Amelita had gone back to the living room to mingle with the guests. It was as if she did not want to see her father slip away. Each man must face the penalty of his or her mistakes.

"Tell her I love her," he said. Then he shook their hand before the car. Two men were with him.

The nine-and-a-half hour ride to Bataan was smooth. The general was alone in the backseat. He stared but his eyes, pulled back his head and closed them. He was tired. He had to rest. He was only 50 years old but he was overdrawn and open to windows. He liked the wind on his face. The men with him snapped their conversation thinking the general wanted to doze off. But the general was wide awake. His mind was racing.

The supervisory was practically empty and the car was running at very high speed. Through the open windows the general could see the fields, the jeep posts, the towns, the trees streaming past him, and the cool air was clearing through it all. The highway was like the Red Sea parting, he thought. He felt small and a little overwhelmed.

The general had not seen Bataan for more than four years. He had time he saw him was a time he crossed to the front. He was a young dog, he called him—was toughed. That war during the preparations for the 1986 snap elections.

That time, Bataan and the general he was serving in a peak apartment in Manila. He was a young officer then, and Concha was a bright, beautiful college student. Concha's family was official of the underground resistance movement, was executed or have been killed in an encounter with government troops in the Cordillera mountains in Bataan. It was quite a reunion for the brothers, with Augusto having a good laugh

A Christmas story

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

UNITED KINGDOM: a little valley on the outskirts of Dunbar is a family's oldest plantation. The family is the only one in the area of property to remain in single hands for the duration of the country public in the vicinity of the plantation is just a matter of fact. The family's name (it's geometry) no matter was the subject matter is everywhere.

In the middle of the plantation stands a little wooden house, the mansion of which—wood from rubber trees—will scarcely replaced of the Bataan. The mansion is a comparatively extensive one, with a big official of the underground resistance movement, was executed or have been killed in an encounter with government troops in the Cordillera mountains in Bataan. It was quite a reunion for the brothers, with Augusto having a good laugh

and tears with behind the scene interviewing.

Also in that she was able to take possession of the rubber plantation. If employees and his wife, who faithfully worked for her since the decades early to be relieved of their duties the instance her father died—they were to be given by her—helping Mrs. ... administrator the property. "I don't know when I could have done without them," she said. The couple owns happily working since there on the land they've to call—the atmosphere when the workers their partners instead of have with him.

When she took over the land, she had some unhealthy rubber trees on them. When she called in on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which was impressed to be sure her for her having entered a partner to cut down the trees, then replanted with new trees. But the trees were then infected and the lage—although, of course, for a small consideration, all the difficulties could be made to vanish.

The workers for the estate, she recalled with the lage to the ground and infect them to grow leaves since again, which is what the BNRR wanted to send her to do. So she built a little house.

It was on the house that Miss Belle Annie—that I open an afternoon with Mrs. ..., who had invited friends to visit her. That was eight years ago. That where I learned the story of the house and her land.

She called it lonely cottage, since she was often put-in-law of her husband's dentist. Of personal cognition and how it is so important, and so little talk to invite on and would start talk in such her home business. Soon, she talked with vendors and other customers, and she was a regular there, like the make-do-ers and his wife, who have made a difference in her life, for she could blessing in recording the plantation, which offers many of employment for a few people. Her house is the store where people experience the opposite as easy approach old age. I remember her as Chinese-mestizo. Because her story is like so many others, and you see difference in her happy-making.

Different Christmas

It is just me, or is to be years Christmas indeed different?

I haven't set foot in the glow and excitement that usually engulfs the holiday since the 1999-day countdown and Christmas began. Few houses have Christmas decorations, and it's December, and the brightness that I used to see outside my bedroom window in late December is nowhere yes. I remember reminiscing my future almost putting up the Christmas décor at, we All Souls' Day like ...

until two weeks ago, ... there was no sign of the new little pine tree on top of the table in my home—not even my favorite tree is set before it. Nowadays.

Christmas has always been a much-anticipated season for people, and ever since I was a kid, I have always looked forward to it with much anticipation as a big celebration. And I still love many excellent one of how it is true then.

KDD, a department store in Cubao (it has already closed shop), always puts up a huge tree in the middle of the center of the big Christmas scene. Its elegance and beautiful people from all walks of life from different parts of the metropolis, who swapped to Cubao by the hundreds, night after night during the whole Christmas season just to watch it. For years, it was definitely a Christmas scene to miss in Manila.

I remember when CCDD would start playing its yearly "preannounce" in October, and "put on the show" starting late November. Then it was gone. The next thing I knew was seeing this similar tree being done in Greenhills. Every year, on any weekday, which is the 20th of December, my family would head for the whole family and my cousins off to Greenhills to watch it. It would also bring us to the "Disney set for" at the Big Dome, which all of us—kids and adults alike—really enjoyed. We would watch the skaters do their stuff, performing on the different theme shows. We would meet individuals that people and make pictures of my memories. But this year we would not go to any of these commercials and even the CCDD show had no, I really loved those memories, and even though I'm already 34, I miss those old times.

Now, we have Feliciano Jones in Mandaluyong, where members fill their front gates with Christmas lights and decorations. But knowing I "you're not dressed for" all the things the Christmas season. I feel that the blinking lights match with the cold Christmas breeze. But, somehow, the glitter—not only of the lights in Feliciano and of the countless pine-tree—and the sound joys of the season seem to be fading.

I guess that the main culprit has been the lack of money time of the year. Then it hits me—the economy, the unstable economy is adding whatever instead of magic that an almost everyone's fears. This is aggravated by our so-called leaders who would rather come up with short-term goals and temporary solutions for long-term problems. Congress has been busy with the pork barrel, and the executive keep tardy from passing important bills. Its members would rather make sure of getting their individual shares of the pork barrel and of course in their next elections.

I'm not pointing the blame on the government, it just con. Its members are making it more worse than ever with the price of basic necessities continually going up and its officials doing nothing about this.

My Christmas this year might not be as dazzling as the ones I had previously, but there are many others whose Christmas will be this, dark and painfully cold. For some, has taken away the star-studded sky with its twinkling lights. The recent calamity has killed hundreds of people, destroyed properties and deprived thousands more of their livelihood, but talent away from them the joy of Christmas. Some will think Christmas for the same ever again.

So Christmas has come to me without hoping for a big celebration. Even without the school party and with the dwindling number of carolers, five 20 will come, whether we like it or not. It's not necessarily about Christmas, but it is really different. Something is wrong, and this should be corrected. Maybe a lot resolutions. It should spread more among people, it should take more than a handful of concerned citizens. I pray that things will be again when they used to be, and so they should be.

* * *

Noah Chin Bautista, 34, is a chief your weather and economy managing editor for Tempo, the school paper of Ateneo School of Quezon City.

'Perfect Christmas'

Jose Ramon N. Quintero

CHRISTMAS, for all the merry-making, gift-giving and sermons of love, never fails to make me lonely. As far as I can remember, I have always yearned for a different kind of Christmas—what is more romantic or that in the Christmas movie "Love Actually."

Every year, when the traditional Christmas gathering at my mother's ancestral house, I end up wondering about the special girl where I am going to meet someday and what my relationship with her will be like. Will she be the one for the solitary dream world that is my mind. I try to listen to the stories of her voice as I close my eyes, feeling that enveloping into the realm of the unconscious. In the loneliness of that lonely night at three, I console myself by thinking about that perfect Christmas.

What is the perfect Christmas? Jose Mari Chan eloquently captures that decade of tinsel with the lyrics of one of his great songs. Indeed, an ideal celebration of Christmas does not wholly depend on where you celebrate it or what gifts you receive though, really many people measure the meaning of Christmas by these. The perfect Christmas, from a romantic yet truly Christian point of view, is an expression of one gesture, without fear.

The treasures of Christmas are not like to their simplicity. If one is fortunate enough to enter anyone Christmas as a whole, it is not in the gifts that we receive, but in the love that we need to search through the dark recesses of the heart to center what the perfect Christmas is simply about enjoying a wonderful moment with your loved ones.

Christmas is two days away. I have absolutely no reason to think that Dec. 25, 2004 would be different from the Christmases of the past years. One can only pause and enjoy the sanctity of the moment.

Jose Ramon N. Quintero, 20, is a second year AB Management Economics *student at the Ateneo de Manila University.*

YOUNG BLOOD

Rhett Nikko Bautista

He wants to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? If you're young, and you have something to say, write to us. Tell your story, tell your truth. Tell it to us.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

Let's save, use our forests

WWF-Philippines decries the senseless loss of lives caused by the recent landslides and the obsessive exploitation of our natural resources.

The knee-jerk call for a total log ban—assuming former governor Joel Reyes chooses to embrace environment first in 170-point agenda—may look like a great idea. But will it solve the problem? Especially since both the executive and judicial branches of government have shown themselves to be unwilling to do their share in the enforcement of existing forestry laws.

The total log ban proposal only proves how easily we can complicate and shunt the problem by dodging the simple solution: a forestry program through community-based forest management (CBFM).

CBFM is true, tree-based reward—specially for indigenous peoples and many of our forest communities—for household use and for income generation. To these people, our forest resources serve as their only economic lifeline. This is their right. These small groups can do little to raise loans to the banks. Without management, never failing in its duty to protect our remaining forests, these small groups may actually be our only hope in preserving them.

In 2000, at the instance of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, President Ramos declared CBFM as the national strategy for forest management to promote the socio-economic upliftment of forest communities through sustainable forest protection. Saying its sustainability with sound ecological and economic guidelines as they can learn how to responsibly use, handle and protect surrounding laboratory studies.

WWF believes that, the tenets considerable will serve as a catalyst for the DENR in main taking its attention, the CBFM, more seriously.

CBFM prevents large-scale illegal logging done in the guise of legitimacy. It helps the community regard its source resources as a life-support system that should be preserved through generations. Rather than waiting for decades for forests to spring back to life on their own, trees should be interlaced in existing forest communities to effectively manage their forests. In the last 1,000 years, we have logged more than 95 percent of our old growth forests. Enough is enough.

—JOSELLA HEPPEN
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LETTERS

A successful forest management program takes time, but the one thing we don't have to wait for is the opportunity for some major changes. There are some moves available today. The quickest solution is to ban a total log ban. Yes, reinforced logging must be stopped. But, the national total log ban is not the answer. It does that they mean business: they simply have to enforce the law. After all, we are in the age of environmental justice. And what else could be more just than giving back the responsibility of forest management to the hands of forest-based communities? This is something we decided to do almost a decade ago. What are we waiting for?

—JOSELLA HEPPEN
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Dual citizenship: its merits

SHORT of saying "ala dayan," Comelec chief Benjamin Abalos Jr. has practically given the go-signal to dual citizens to run for public office in the May 2004 elections. In an interview with reporters, Abalos said that Filipinos who have taken the oath of allegiance to the Philippines under the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003 (RA 9225) are qualified to run for elective positions.

Abalos' statement is a welcome development for those who have been waiting for the Comelec to clarify the matter. Many dual citizens have been hesitant to file their certificates of candidacy for fear that they would be disqualified for not renouncing their foreign citizenship.

Abalos' statement is also a welcome development for the country. Dual citizens have much to offer the country in terms of their skills, talents and resources. Many of them have become successful in their chosen fields abroad and have much to share with their kababayans back home.

Dual citizens have been actively participating in the political affairs of countries where they have taken their oath of allegiance. Why should they be prevented from doing the same in the Philippines?

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Harmful to Philippine economy

THE issue is in response to the news item: "UP researchers ask Church to soften population stand," (PDI, 12/1/04) The paper cited "Population and poverty: the real score," which was cited in the report. Statistics a complete lack of logic on the part of the 17 researchers from the University of the Philippines who authored it. Firstly, it shows a lack of understanding of Catholic teachings. Secondly, the data that the researchers cite to "prove" that large family sizes cause poverty was interpreted with incomplete data. The researchers failed to consider that large family sizes could result from poverty, and not the other way around.

In a country whose economy is centered on manual labor, a rich mahas sense that parents would view a large family with trepidation bringing hands, as a richer source of poverty. The paper further cited that "rapid population growth and high fertility rates" increase poverty. However, statistics from the Population Division of the Department of UN Economic and Social Affairs show that the fertility rate of the Philippines has been steadily dropping to replacement level, even without the widespread use of artificial contraception methods.

Pushing for nationwide population control could actually be detrimental to the Philippine economy. It would mean the total fertility rate to drop below replacement level. A decrease in population means a decrease in the nation's market size, and a smaller market could mean a decrease in the economic value, unlike in countries that offer a reliable national pension fund, Philippine parents rely on his or her children will have no choice to support themselves in their old age; as a result, country could be from malnutrition and lack of medical care.

These patients are already becoming evident. It is interesting that the economics professors of UP have failed to grasp concepts that are evident even to high-school students.

—REYZELLI ARZLI REYNERO-LAWS
138 Ilango Drive,
Ipsala Subang,
Mandaluyong City

How to implement environment laws

BINGA dam's parish priest, Fr. Antonio Estrogerio, described logging as the cause of the recent floods and landslides. According to Environment Secretary Mike Defensor, illegal logging was the cause of the Ilah floods. A municipal mayor blamed the charcoal makers and kaingeros (slash-and-burn farmers) for the disaster (PDI, 11/15/04).

Of course, another cause is lately in its persevering warning laws that have hopelessly lax. Act 10902, the law illegal logging law and Presidential Decree 705, the forest code law.

Lorenzo makes Dad E. Monti says unarmed that we have a substantial number of men that are unemployment for lack of money. Because of this, he appealed to the members of the 15th Congress to raise a move of alliance, adding that the savings to be derived from this move can be used in supplementing loan. (PDI, 12/20/04)

Monti is right. The suspension of the operations of the 15th Congress will free the allocated budget for the lawmakers and data until for the implementation of environmental laws. As early as 1999, Hugo Arellano, Pangasinan environment official, has been saying that the governor has only 37 forest guards protecting 126,423 hectares of forest. The spot of funds we cannot take the needed number of forest guards.

—GUIDO B. PANTOJA
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Across the NATION

Your reader feedback is welcome. Send your comments to (02) 896-6000 or 281-5366 and address it to Editor Tony Gonzaga

FPJ funeral draws TV ratings, crowds

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—Several (separate), vans and cars full of Laguna residents went to the Sto. Domingo Church as early as Monday to personally have a glimpse of the remains of Fernando Poe Jr. and witness the burial yesterday.

Bengil town resident Rebie Reyes-Cordero, who was among those who came to Poe's reader.

She said she was moved by the long lines of tireless Poe fans who remained without complaint, just to see their movie idol.

Back in the province, as early as 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Laguna residents waited to watch on TV the live-broadcast coverage of the wee-hours arrival and funeral rites of their favorite actor.

In Magsaysay, Laguna where Emilio Ramon Ejercito Jr. is the municipal mayor, a big TV screen was playing a popular movie of Poe at the town plaza for curiosity-seekers.

Twenty-twelve, 70, of Bengil, Laguna, said Poe was her favorite movie actor. She witnessed the whole process of the funeral on TV coverage with daughter Representative Pilar Juliana Cordero, 32, a member of two.

Mina Cushing of San Pablo City said that at 4 a.m. of the last day of Philippine concerns, she went down to the Sto. Domingo Church and waited for several hours to view Poe's remains.

Irene Guardia and Aileen Esquerra, both of San Pablo City, said they, too, marched to the North Cemetery in Manila for their last commitment.

Reyes de los Reyes of Bengil said the wee hrs and almost missed the Wednesday blow at 6 a.m. because she stayed awake almost overnight to watch the funeral services.

But in Pangasinan, the home province of President Macapagal-Arroyo, there has been a little display of mourning for the death of Senator Fernando Poe Jr., Mr. Image's closest rival in the May 10 election.

In the public market in the capital city of San Fernando, people were busy shopping for Christmas presents. A few still remembers were found in a few stalls and TV sets, catching updates of Poe's burial at the Manila North Cemetery, but less than 60 had been seen.

Bob Martin, a newspaper vendor, said video rental stores were low with Tabloids and broadsheets that carried stories on Poe sold like hot cakes, he said.

People, he said, were looking for stories about Poe's death and his wife.

In Cagayan, workers in various villages in Tuguegarao City unanimously stopped the singing of the Sobrang, a traditional Ilocano ritual, on Tuesday night. Instead, Pandanguenos were seeing to watch the tributes to Poe and his burial broadcast live by various networks.

Villagers who have no TV sets huddled in their neighbors' living rooms to watch the coverage. *Jocelle Ongkiko and Gerardo Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Fe Antolihao Uddaj, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Jeo Gloriandez Pineda, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

GRIEVING mourners kiss a poster for actor and politician Fernando Poe Jr. during his wake at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Chavit says he values friendship with FPJ

By Leonnie Ballaz Jr.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VIGAN CITY—Former Ilocos Sur Governor Chavit Singson said he considered the 40-year friendship that he had forged with the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Singson said he has kept a room radiance for Poe's son as his Bulacan's counterpart.

The room is on the second floor of Singson's three-storey house.

Singson visited Poe's wake at the Sto. Domingo Church on Thursday and said he was warmly received by Poe's relatives and supporters.

Singson said despite his support for Poe's rival, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections, he and Poe never engaged in a fight and remained friends until the actor's death.

In other news (August, in 2000), reported Estrada's alleged acceptance of racing monies and kickbacks from tobacco excise taxes.

The request led to Estrada's ouster in January 2001.

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Cops charge rebel leader with murder of lawyer

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Laguna Bureau

BIÑAN CITY—Police have filed a criminal complaint against a squad leader of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) and two other unidentified suspects in the killing of Aklan human rights lawyer Cullen Sr.

A murder complaint was filed on Monday against Rolly Sevilla and two other unidentified persons at the Biñan Provincial Prosecutor's Office.

Supt. Gilberto Wagayan, acting Biñan police chief, said Sevilla was identified by two witnesses as one of the two gunmen who reportedly shot Cullen in front of his home on Cathay Street, Biñan last November 20.

He said the witnesses identified Sevilla from 10 photographs and video footage of RPA-ABB members and leaders.

One of the witnesses was Cullen's companion on the night he was killed.

When the two arrived at the lawyer's residence, the witness went out of the victim's home to attend to a patient he is.

The suspects suddenly appeared and shot Cullen. The killers then sought cover under a parked Mercedes Benz when gunfire rang out. The gunmen later sped off in a motorcycle driven by a third suspect.

17 bullet wounds

The lawyer died on the spot, he recalled reliable with at least 17 bullet wounds in the head and body. Investigators recovered more than 20 bullet shells.

Magsaysay said Sevilla leads an RPA-ABB unit operating in the northern Aklan town of Tobias and Biñan and includes women terrorists for he said they had confirmed that the RPA-ABB was behind the killing.

The police official said Sevilla was supporting leaders involved in a land dispute case against a group of Cullen.

The witness's elder brother, Manuel "Warren" Cullen Jr., a former top official of the New People's Army (NPA) on Panay Island, was among those who broke away from the NPA in the early 1980s and formed the RPA-ABB.

But he later land a falling out with the breakaway group and has committed no counting terrorist incidents in the province.

Possibilities

Manuel Cullen said it was possible that his former comrades mistook for his late brother for the group suspected that the Cullen brothers were behind the killing of RPA-ABB Nicolas Tiongco commander Dexter "Maloney" Bongo.

But the RPA-ABB denied that they were behind or even connected with the killing.

"But have never pointed to any member of their family as being behind the killing of its Maloney, RPA-ABB national commander Stephen Pastores alias Carapali Lucido Cullen told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

ROUNDUP

Drug suspect shot dead

TAGAYTAY CITY—A drug lordas Eastern Tanauan and accomplice of Northern Samar Gov. Reynaldo Tan was shot dead by police during a buy-bust operation here at 4 p.m. on Wednesday. Chief Insp. Charmin Cabanos Jr., police director of Batangas Provincial Police Office, identified the big-time drug supplier as Eduardo Llamas and his companion as Jerry Ramos. Cabanos said they were in the right temporary use of three members of the drug-buy bust operation after he alighted from his car at Barangay Mahayhay in Tagaytay City and did not see other MPDEA. who was in the vicinity. Caught in the crossfire of Philippine government agency and was also marked for liquidation by the Cebu People's Army.

Jojo Gadiano, PDI Visayas Bureau

Cop beaten to death

CAMP CRAME, ALLEN SANTOS, Bulacan—A police man was tortured to death by his subordinate members in Bocaue municipal jail, according to a police report. PSI Oliver Balmedo, 37, of Bocaue municipal police station, was found dead inside his office. His suspected attackers Alfredo Ricbo, 35, and Ricardo Sevilla, 38, both of Bocaue. Bal. Police said Balmedo was found the suspects on the case of his friend who was allegedly killed by the two suspects. It is said all the suspects to pay the beat detention expenses but the two refused and instead attacked him.

Fernando Paras, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Wanted man falls

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Police in Mountain Province, Benguet, arrested a man included in the list of most wanted persons in the Cordillera on Thursday. A report from the Cordillera police office in Camp Dangwa in La Trinidad, Benguet, said Ricardo Dayaday, 37, a native of Bontoc, Mountain Province, was arrested at the municipal hall of Barlig, Mountain Province. Dayaday was charged with murder. The police official of P50,000 was set for Tuguegarao arrest. *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Fisherfolk rescued

CEBU CITY—Eight fishermen were rescued by a Cargo vessel off Cebu's coast on Thursday after their motorized outrigger capsized off Cebu's coast on Thursday after their motorized outrigger capsized off Cebu's coast on Thursday after their motorized outrigger capsized

INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Editor Jon Bandoquit
Bureau Chief Florinda G. Sabiniano

Yuletide sailing for marine ecology

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Legazpy, Camarines Sur

ALARMED by the fast-deteriorating state of marine life in Lagonoy Gulf, governmental officials of Camarines Sur have launched a campaign to protect the second largest body of water in the country.

Dubbed "Pasko sa Dagat (Christmas at Sea)," the drive launched on Dec. 14 involved fisherfolk and area armed operators in various cultural activities that highlighted the importance of balance between the use and preservation of marine resources.

The Lagonoy Gulf, a rich fishing ground where blue marlin abounds, lies in the eastern portion of Camarines Sur. It stretches down south to Albay and northeast to the island province of Catanduanes, covering an area of 3,071 square kilometers.

But the water body is choking with problems of unregulated cutting of mangrove trees, destructive fishing methods, seagrass and seaweeds, and pollution from industrial companies.

A Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources document reveals that only 203 hectares of the gulf, or 20 percent of its total mangrove area of 1,700 hectares, remain. Live coral cover of its outer areas has considerably decreased.

The seagrass beds are also said to have been disturbed or altered as a result of the construction of resorts and marinduque facilities.

Josefina Delfin, BFAR assistant regional director, said the "largest deep and scientifically challenging" gulf was bordered by 33 towns in three provinces, covering 165 villages. Some 7,500 fisherfolk depend on it for livelihood, she said.

The BFAR, local government officials and nongovernment organizations had taken initiatives since the early 1990s to install resource management (CRM) system that addressed the ecological and environmental problems of the Lagonoy Gulf, Delfin said.

The issues of sustainable use and ecological preservation are common among most fishing grounds all over the country she said.

Important step

The "Pasko sa Dagat" campaign, is one initiative to draw in coastal communities in participatory diversity in solving these issues to save the long-term effects to the environment and the people's livelihood, Delfin explained.

Through it, a government entity can reinforce the goal of letting people's awareness on the need to participate in managing the coastal and marine resources, she said.

Six coastal towns, represented by some 4,000 fisherfolk and area armed operators, joined the kick-off program on Batang Island in Lagonoy.

Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. said the "special" Yuletide celebration sought to achieve a convergence of marine ecological campaigns of LGUs along the gulf.

"We wanted to nurture advocates of safe fishing technologies and practices among the fisherfolk. Ourselves and encourage the LGUs to initiate the promotion of sound utilization of marine resources in a sustainable way," Villafuerte said.

The "Pasko sa Dagat" also from the participation of the area vessel operators so that they could see the good effects of cheese marine resources in order to enhance long-term efforts in the area.

The campaign stems from Ordinance No. 26, which the provincial board approved in 2003.

Biodiversity

Villafuerte said the ordinance upholds the conservation of biodiversity by prohibiting the gathering, taking, or transporting of corals, giant clams or spawning fish, and the capture of dolphins, whales, sea turtles, manta rays, whale sharks and other marine plant and animal species identified in the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

It prohibits construction of tourist facilities directly in the water's edge to prevent areas that could result in the loss and alteration of breeding and nursery grounds of fish.

Dumping of garbage and waste from sea vessels is banned at any port and waters within the territorial jurisdiction of the province.

Villafuerte said the provincial government would undertake the marine ecology campaign every year. Delfin said the "Pasko sa Dagat" included two of the four CRM strategies that the BFAR had set for seagrass—community participation and government intervention. The other CRM strategies are FISH intervention and information building.

TWO JUMPING whale sharks, beached last year along the shallow waters of the Lagonoy Gulf in Sabang Port, San Jose, Camarines Sur, are helped back to deeper waters by fisherfolk.

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NOW OPEN
ARANETA SQUARE

Typhoons won't stop bishop's 'simbang gabi'

By Rainulo O. Pedro
Iriberra, Quezon

DESPITE the spate of typhoons that struck northern Quezon and Aurora late last month, the "simbang gabi" (dawn Masses) traditions lives on among victims who flock to churches deep in mud.

Bishop Rolando J. Tria Tirona of the Diocese of Infanta Quezon) has been celebrating the Masses since Dec. 16 to sustain faith and hope in the hearts of his suffering parishioners.

Tirona also wrote a poem of hope shortly before the Masses began in the Infanta Cathedral and scribbled "Merry Christmas" greetings to donors, benefactors and pastors.

"We are strengthened that you are still with us as we continue to help rehabilitate and rebuild people's lives and families," he said in a letter. "Even as in the Pentecost of Infanta, which was hardest hit by the recent flash flood tragedy, Christmas must go on...it must be solemnly celebrated."

"As we carry the heavy load of pain and suffering in this time, we are consoled and strengthened by the generous hearts and hands ready to help us during our miserables and urgent needs. During these moments of urgency, YOU WERE THERE TO HELP ME!" Tirona said.

He thanked the donors for their kindness and assistance. "We think of how the Holy Family experienced suffering and uncertainty as well. The Mother Mary and St. Joseph, too had to suffer both that God is with us."

The letter was also signed by former pastor and Bishop Emeritus Julio Xavier Labayen and Vicars Mario Ibo Lores of the Agencies of Communications Simon (ACT), relief operations director.

RCT Fr. Rolando V. Beyaye, who coordinates relief operations for the flood victims in the province, said Tirona had traveled to the devastated areas to survey Quezon and Aurora, including the parishes on Polillo Island, during the torrents. Masses to lead the suffering in celebration.

Churchgoers, young and old alike, attended the Masses, standing with bare feet on the muddy floor and singing songs of praises, Beyaye said.

He said the bishop arose by ordinary transport and sometimes on foot throughout the pedicure and so as far as the Polillo archipelago, General Nakar and Real. He would go to Manila to see Infanta to reach the towns of Burias.

The prelature is composed of 28 parishes with four vicariates...the Divine Infant Jesus of Prague and Saint Mark in Infanta, St. Joseph in Real, Saint Luis Gonzaga in Gumaca, Aurora, and St. Anthony of Padua in Casiguran, Aurora.

Tirona's poem in Filipino, written at 3:00 a.m. of Dec. 16 is below:

"Sa gitna ng kanilokohan,
isip ko'y gumagala
Sa gitna ng kasiraan,
Hinaggiyang nais makamtan
Sa gitna ng kalamidad
Hinahanap ang may maggagamit
Sa gitna ng kagipitan
Hinahanap ang kapitbahay!
Maligayang Pasko sa mga Pinoy!
Habang buhay, Infanta!"

Donations to the typhoon victims of northern Quezon and Aurora may be sent to the BS. Carmel Divine Burial, Broadway Street, New Manila, Quezon City c/o Fr. Jovie Pinaga or Bro. Rodong Rosario

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METRO
Editor Exec: G. Dipasupil ■ Assoc. Editor: Corazon S. Silva

FPJ mementos, memories are made (and sold) of these

BUTTONS in memory of actor Fernando Poe Jr. enjoy brisk sales outside Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City. —

By Tarra V. Quismundo, Lolita B. Statuerria and Tina G. Santos

MANY mourned his death by crying, lighting candles, chanting their idol's name, or wearing banners and Barong Tagalog during Fpj's funeral.

But many, too, found an opportunity to do brisk business with the crowd craved that turned out during the eight day wake for Fernando Poe Jr. at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City, and at his burial yesterday at the Manila North Cemetery.

Mementos of the late screen idol were for sale at the entrance of the cemetery as early as sunrise. Strategically positioning themselves not only at the cemetery's entry points but even in the narrow alleys within, the retailers sold Fpj T-shirts, vests, headbands, wristbands, pins and caskets.

"My thought of making shirts with his name on it became flamboyant when he died for him," said Michael de Ros.

Long journey

Shortly after the died of a stroke a minute past midnight on Sunday last week, the local garment company decided to make Fpj shirts and wristbands in honor of the actor much beloved in the Muslim-dominated southern provinces. Poe had played the role of a Muslim hero in several films.

De Ros journeyed to Manila aboard a ship, bringing with him 800 pieces of Fpj shirts in red, orange, yellow, blue and white.

The shirts with different designs meant to express love for the actor, carried the messages "I Love FPJ," "Thanks ang Lolas (Gratitude the light)," "FPJ: The Man, The Legend" and "He will never forget (Di)," Others were painted with photos of Poe with his wife, actress Susan Roces. A light, white cotton T-shirt printed with FPJ's name cost P40, while a T-shirt with his name and silk screen image sold from P100 to P150.

"It's cheaper now," said Jocelyn Ingalla, who said she came all the way from Marabastar, Pampanga for a last glimpse of her idol.

"My sister was able to buy a white T-shirt with the same design at the Sto. Domingo Church for P60," she added.

Fpj vests were priced at P500 each, headbands and pins were sold for P15 a piece, and socks at P10.

Since Poe's wake at Sto. Domingo, the shiny had been the best sellers. "We sold shirts worth P80,000," said de Asis, also of no last. "But now it's we were not able sell them all, we could bring them back to Zamboanga."

Alfredo Badoy also joined the dance to sell to a captive crowd. After passing the funeral march, Badoy set off to display his merchandise—magazines showing Poe's photos and remaining facility cases.

"At Sto. Domingo, many people bought the magazines, and I made P10,000 a day three days in a row," he said.

Also sold at the cemetery were along buggies and ice-cooks painted with "I Love FPJ," competing with straw hats and fans, towels, a variety of food items and even power tools!

On business, managers were more direct. President of the Philippines the Insolency Fernando Poe, Jr." road site banner. Another read, "Sa King puno ay ang bayan (What will happen to our country)?"

But not everything was for sale.

Bodies in coffin, bedded warm and packed food donated by the friends of the Poe family were distributed free to the media, marshals and volunteers assigned to do assorted jobs at the funeral site.

Copies of a 203-page colored commemorative book, titled "Haring mga Hari: Fernando Poe Jr., 1939-2004" were also given away for free to those who joined the search to Poe's final resting place at the Manila North Cemetery.

Credits due

The book highlighted Poe's achievements as an actor, and showed his helpful and generous side, as recounted by ordinary men who wanted to help his memory and was persuaded later on to run for president. The book ended with the message that in the hearts of the viewers, Poe won the elections and would always be considered a hero.

The burial was generally peaceful and orderly.

Minister Police Director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong was careful to thank the media for helping manage the huge crowds with the funeral's organizers.

No stampedes or big fights broke out among the supporters, and there were no confrontations between Poe's kin and rivals, he added.

The only unsavory aspect reviewed by police were stories of swollen, bags and cell phones lost or thrown.

Careful not to repeat incidents of violent disposal that had resulted in the deaths of two children in 1998, authorities are preventing the mainly old not carry toy firearms on them.

TREATMENT POOL ACCIDENT

Two boys drown in Rizal landfill

By Ruth L. Navarro

TWO BOYS drowned Tuesday in the waste treatment pool of the disastrous San Mateo landfill.

The bodies of friends Jan Agustin, 7, and Jude Calanlan, 8, were found floating in the pool at about 7 p.m.

Agustin and Calanlan were aged to get into the treatment because there were no fences to keep anyone out, especially at the treatment pool, said police investigator Manuel Balleo.

According to police, Calanlan asked permission from his father, Gilbert, to go out and play.

Calanlan and Agustin, who were friends and fellow first graders at the Baguio Maranguio City Elementary School, then went to the landfill site.

Gilbert was unaware of where they were going.

When it started to get dark and his son had not yet come home, Gilbert began to look for them but failed.

A neighbor told Gilbert that he saw the children taking off toward the landfill area.

The father quickly went to the dump and found his son's pair of slippers on the side of the pool.

Gilbert drove into the pool and found the two boys already dead, police said.

Police believe that the two boys were playing inside the pool, which was used to treat leachate and wastewater from the landfill, when they slipped into the water.

Although most of the 73-hectare landfill is in San Mateo, Rizal, the water treatment pool is within the limits of metropolis City particularly in Sitio Sapitan, Barangay San Juan.

The government opened the landfill in San Mateo to accommodate the some 6,000 tons of garbage produced daily in Metro Manila.

It was closed down in December 2000 after it had reportedly reached its capacity.

The death of the closed down facility is the second such incident in a dump.

On Dec. 9, a 9-year-old boy was also killed in a garbage slide at the garbage transfer facility at Pier 18 in Manila.

Makati emergency hospital to open

By Margaux C. Grea

IT MAY come too late for responding to possible fireworks-related injuries on New Year's Eve but the new Makati Action Area Center (MAAC) will surely be of great help to residents for the coming years when it begins operations on Jan. 1.

Mayor Jejomar Binay said the MAAC, the first medical facility in the country dedicated solely to emergency care, would provide timely and advanced emergency care to residents and the general public.

"We have built this facility in line with our conviction that quality emergency care is a fundamental right of every person, and should be made available to all who seek it," Binay said in a statement.

The facility is located at the old site of the Ospital ng Makati on Malugay Street, Barangay Bel-Air, Makati City.

According to MAAC administrator Dr. Rory Perdio, the center is fully equipped with the appropriate in-house diagnostic, administrative and clinical support services for the proper treatment of severely ill and injured patients.

"The MAAC will be staffed round-the-clock by a full complement of qualified doctors, nurses and support personnel trained in responding to acute illness and injury via the triage approach," Perdio said.

The administrator, however, stressed that the facility will not handle "outpatient" cases.

FPJ's burial and other stuff

ON TARGET
Antonio Taduran

FPJ WAS laid to rest yesterday amidst pomp and splendor befitting a movie star of his stature, a man who won the millions of fans, and they called him "Da King."

Poor people jostled, elbowed, shoved and pushed one another for a chance to bury the man they admired on and off screen. Since movie tend to portray actors bigger than life, fans think that what they did on screen was also the character which he's not in front of the camera.

FPJ symbolized the poor people's hope of a better life.

* * *

The promise of a better life is something we look forward to day after day after day. If the better life doesn't come today, then it will come tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow.

So what's dream doesn't end because it's something to chase after for the rest of one's life.

That's why actors and actresses who portray the stories of poor people succeeding or getting rich in the end become popular with the masses.

Hope springs eternal, as the saying goes.

* * *

The poor identify with FPJ—as well as his boon friend Senate President Estrada—because they portrayed roles their fans thought were their real personas.

To the unthinking fans, reality and fantasy merge, there's no difference between the two.

That's why in this country and even in the United States it's very easy for a movie star to become a politician. Look at former President Ronald Reagan who became governor of California.

* * *

I heard MTV-CBN management is thinking of getting back Korina Sanchez to anchor for TV. Retired star Karen Davila also replaced her.

Karen cried and made a scene after actress Susan Roces blasted her network for a "biased" coverage of FPJ on the campaign trail during the last presidential election. She even apologized to Mr. Roces for the "sin" of her network.

The last thing a broadcast journalist should do is to become emotional during an interview. A news anchor should not her sympathize nor become adversary. All you can do is interview.

Sanchez would have parried Susan Roces' threats as ABS-CBN the way an expert anchor should.

But now, Korina Sanchez is irreplaceable as an anchor.

* * *

After Tuesday's column, InterExcel Personnel Inc. is looking for 50 "caregivers" to be sent to Taiwan. Applicants must be high school graduates, single, between 21 and 35 years old, and must undergo training for six months.

They gave much to say claim that some people might be using the Taiwanese as Maria, a home for the aged and sewer children, for their own selfish ends. Taiwan is located in Carmona, Cavite.

Some of the callers were at the "Taiwanese" when I went to their office to investigate re distribute food, medicine and Christmas gifts to its wards. Kwapah, a consultant of Philippine Airlines flight attendants and stewards which serve the Taiwan privileged when they're not serving PAL passengers in flight.

We noticed that the people who run Taiwanese were sincere in their desire to help. One old woman was in extreme pain when we were giving a Christmas party for the old folks and took the woman left alone by the Taiwanese employers. Only the maids/caregivers were trying to ease her pain.

It took hospitals to bring the old woman, Paulita Bonzalayana, to the Makati Medical Center.

My callers from Mr. InterExcel said that donations for the old folks' home ended up in a store owned by a Catholic priest who had been tricked out for distribution.

You'll hear more about Taiwan and that priest in subsequent columns.

Court junks libel case vs ABS

THE QUEZON City Prosecutor's Office has dismissed GMA-7's libel case against ABS-CBN for "lack of probable cause."

In a Dec. 2 resolution, Assistant City Prosecutor Benito C. Simmoncos ruled that the evidence presented by GMA-7 was insufficient to indict ABS-CBN, according to a statement from ABS-CBN.

The libel charge was prompted by ABS-CBN's Gwen Tulfo's and Lynda Jumilla's reports where they said GMA-7 had committed a violation which aired the tragedy in Civil news footage of ABS-CBN.

Kingi terrorists had kidnapped and held Delia Cima, a contract worker, for several days before releasing her.

The prosecutor's resolution stated that the term "pag-umulanan ng balita" in the newscasts by Tulfo and Jumilla, did not have defamatory imputation.

"The statements made were simply to inform the viewers of the alleged expert sighting/appearance made by the complainants when they aired the Angelo de la Cruz footage," said the resolution.

It said "the statements made by the respondents can be considered factual and true without malice and recalled [had] commit[ed] broadcast in good faith and for justifiable ends."

Chow Yun-fat in 'Pirates' sequels

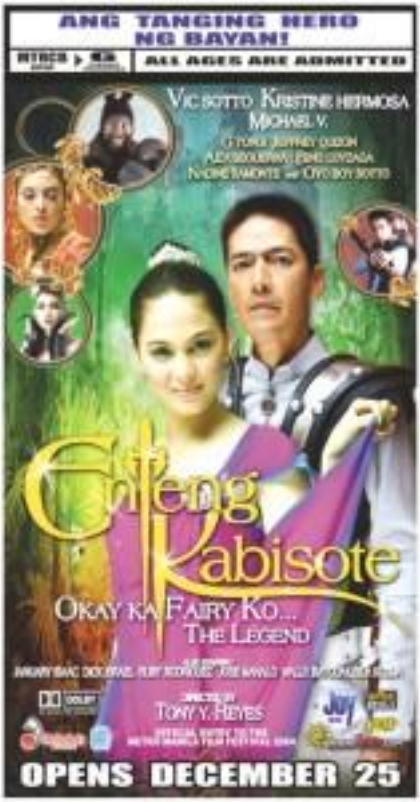
HONG KONG—Hong Kong action hero Chow Yun-fat is set to star in the upcoming sequels of box-office smash "Pirates of the Caribbean."

Chinese-language newspaper Apple Daily said Chow will play the famous 16th century Chinese pirate Cheung Po Tsai in the second and third installments of the film. He will team up with original cast members including Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, Geoffrey Rush and Keira Knightley.

Kidding Stone Jeg and Keith Richards will play the fathers of Depp's character, Captain Jack Sparrow.

Chen said the movie's producers and director contacted Chow's management company in the US and director Gore Verbinski flew to Hong Kong last week to discuss the screenplay with Chow.

Chow made his name as a gun-toting hero in Hk filmmaker John Woo's classics "Hard-Boiled" and "A Better Tomorrow." AFP



Don't miss your favorite TV shows!
Check out today's Inquirer TV Guide on the Entertainment section

Fired-up Realtors clobber Barako

Patrimonio No. 16 jersey retired

By Jane Manaora

KENNEDI Burgos recovered from a listless start to lift Sta. Lucia Realty to a 105-84 thrashing of Red Bull Barako in the Game Rimando PBA Philippine Cup late night at the Philsports Arena.

Burgos shot 22 of his 27 points in the second half, including four triples, after going two-of-nine from the field in the first two quarters.

But it was actually Hardien Aquino and Dennis Espino who made life easier for the 1998 MVP as Sta. Lucia's nine-season forced the Barako defense to collapse on them, giving Dominador open looks at the basket in the final half.

Espino also had a couple of three-point plays when the Realtors were beginning to pull away before the 4-foot-9 Aquino took over and roped with Orlando Rodriguez and Ryan Gregorio.

Ogie Gumatac and Rafael Arnaiz also joined hands with Dominador as Sta. Lucia notched its ninth victory in 17 games.

"We have a Christmas party after the game. I told them that if we lose and go there with a heavy heart, we won't enjoy the night and the probably [also] throw up," said Sta. Lucia coach Alfonsito Chua.

The Barako, who were second-ranked in the first half, lost for the 11th time and will finish their 20-game eliminations schedule against San Miguel Beer on Christmas day. The loss was also the fourth straight for Red Bull.

In case of a tie, the Realtors now have a much better quotient over the Barako, who beat them in triple-overtime, 124-116, in Iloilo City almost two months ago. Both teams are vying to avoid the ninth and 10th seed, which will have to beat their wild card opponents twice in advance to the next round.

"We don't want to be at a disadvantage as we have to sweep our remaining games," said Chua, whose Realtors face the Alaska Aces on Jan. 5 to end their eliminations round wins.

Espino backed up Dominador with 21 points and 12 rebounds. Aquino had 17 while Santos and Gumatac added 15 and 11 points each as the Realtors ended a two-game slump.

Meanwhile, a couple of former Ateneo players made an ground the league's counting of Facebook skipper Alvin Patrimonio.

Former Fastbreak coach Bobby Dalupan and former league commissioner Rudy Salud graced the ceremonies, where Patrimonio's No. 16 jersey was also retired.

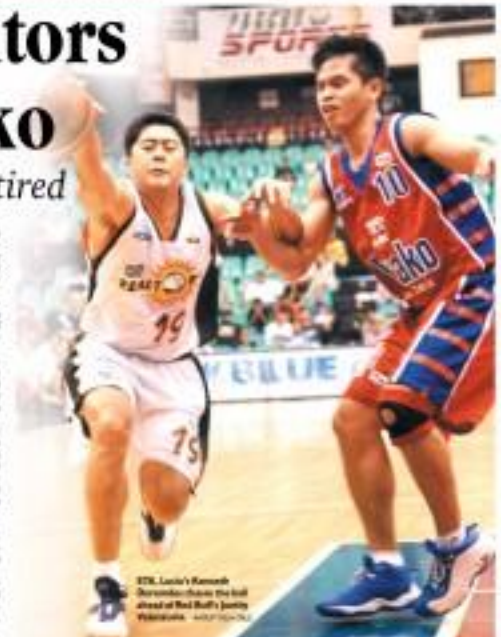
Dalupan was among PBA's season's early coaches in the professional league while Salud was the commissioner when the four-time Most Valuable Player first made his mark in the league as a rookie in 1986.

The Scores

STA. LUCIA 105—Burgos 27, Espino 17, Aquino 17, Santos 15, Gumatac 11, Arnaiz 4, Cruz 3, Gonzales 2, Sanchez 2, Ivanov 2, Francisco 0.

RED BULL 84—Eguilos 13, Mercado 10, Reyes 10, Magbuhos 10, Sobrio 8, Sumagaysay 8, Cuntz 5, Sumagaysay 4, Serrano 3, Yeban 3, Robinson 3, Aguinaldo 0.

Quarters: 30-18, 49-46, 71-66, 105-84



STA. Lucia's Kennedi Burgos(No.10) eyes the ball ahead of Red Bull's Jonrey Yeban(No. 4)

P15.5-M DEAL

I now have a permanent home, says Villanueva

By Dennis U. Bruo

A BIGGER house?

Not yet, but Red Bull made sure that young shooter Javier Villanueva will continue to patrol the Barako lane with the security of a draft sergeant until 2009 after signing him up to a three-year-and-a-half contract extension recently.

"I'm very happy because I now have a permanent home," Villanueva told the boosters.

"All the hard work is paying off for Javy," Asher Santos, Villanueva's trusted adviser, said yesterday. "He's got a long way to go, but he's on the right track with his training and look."

Surprised in that the 6-foot-3 former Ateneo bomber was still available in the seventh round of the 2003 PBA draft, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao wasted no time steering Villanueva, then shoring up the Bombo frontline.

"At the start, Ravi's feeling quite low with the rookie. I told him to work hard and prove his worth. I think he accepted and passed the challenge," Santos recalled.

Villanueva blossomed into Red Bull's main man following the departure of "Tik-chatta" Jhaymie Gee and Mark Pruneda.

This season, Villanueva is averaging 19 points, 9 rebounds, 2 assists and 1 block shot per game, making him a favorite for the PBA Most Improved Player of the award this season.

After being drafted by Red Bull, Villanueva inked a contract lasting up to Dec. 31, 2005. His new pact will give Villanueva the maximum salary of P350,000 from Jan. 1, 2006 to Jan. 1, 2009 or a total of P15.5 million, earlier highlighted.

VILLANUEVA: Three-year maximum contract from Red Bull Barako

Ramirez: PSC caretaker

By Marc Anthony Reyes

RAMIREZ

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission is now in the hands of a caretaker-PSC commissioner Butch Ramirez.

The most senior commissioner of the PSC board, Ramirez, according to reliable sources, was appointed officer-in-charge of the agency for three to six months after meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang yesterday.

The short term of office is a third of term for the sports official from Davao, who has been in the commission since the term of Butch Tanseco five years ago.

The President's main challenge for Ramirez, according to sources, is to "weed out the source of corruption" in the P600 million-a-year agency, which has been a perennial issue in the PSC.

Ramirez didn't issue any statement but sources close to him said he has "already accepted the challenge" given by the President, who is expected to name a formal appointment anytime this week.

The development ended the two-week long guessing game as to the replacement of outgoing chair Jim Rubaan, who has been considered to the Games and Amusements Board.

But the other contenders should not be counted out since the President usually appoints an OIC after the chair is removed.

Former PSC commissioners Jesus Clemente Cojuangco and now Baseball Hog Monico Puentevella had also briefly served as OIC before a PSC chair was officially appointed.

But in addition, Ramirez has gained the inside track in the new three-year-term bid for Rubaan's position.

The PSC commander, an Ateneo athletic director and 1991 Southeast Asian Games organizing committee chairman, is a general Jaime Cojuangco and Manila Sports Council chair and former Asian taekwondo champ Ali Atienza.

Ramirez has earlier been appointed deputy secretary general of the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee, which is in the thick of preparations for the 2005 Games to be held in the country in November.

Nat'l football tilt kicks off Dec. 26

PHILIPPINE football fans will be treated to a year-ending national tournament from Dec. 26-30 at the breezeway of the Philippine Offshore Sports Club, Bonifacio Football Club, Taft Football Club, and the Blue Guard Football Club.

Group B: Philippine Navy Football Club, Philippine Air Force Football Club, PEU Football Club, and Urbiztondo Football Club.

The eight teams fanfare in their respective top Filipino football players, many of whom have seen action in the recent Tiger Cup competition staged in Malaysia by the Asian Football Federation. They will compete for the coveted Philippine Cup and various cash prizes consisting of first prize, P100,000; second prize, P80,000; third prize, P60,000; fourth prize, P40,000.

Group round-robin eliminations will be staged in GO from Dec. 26-28.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Blowout wins mark Young Guns /A20

Cavs turn back T'Wolves /A21

WHAT'S INSIDE

SUPERAL, RAMOS STAND OUT

Blowout wins mark Young Guns

RAMOS wins by 10 shots while Superal (right) prevails by 24.

JP De Claro came out on top of the only age group that went down the wire yesterday, nipping Lloyd Go for the 9-under crown of the Young Guns International Jungolf championships at the Manila Southwoods.

Post-Jordan Bulls finally learn how to string victories

CHICAGO (AP) Illinois—Well, well, well, look who's on a little winning streak going.

The four-straight victories by the Chicago Bulls would hardly be worth a mention for most teams, but consider that the Bulls haven't strung together that many since Michael Jordan was wearing red and black—in nine seasons, three crushes and umpteen players ago—and it's a sign they might finally be making some progress.

"It's nice," Bulls guard Bob Hamilton said on Tuesday "But we've got to be realistic about where we're at and realize we still have a ways to go."

Well, at 8-15 record, it probably is a little premature to start dreaming space in the trophy case or making plans for a victory parade in June. But for the first time since the dynasty was broken up, the Bulls are looking like a legitimate NBA team.

After opening the season 0-9 to match the franchise record for season start, Chicago has won six of its last eight. If not for shooting a late lead against the Dallas Mavericks, the Bulls would have a six-game winning streak. Even with that awful start, this is Chicago's best record after 23 games since 1997-98, the last title run.

And unlike the last few seasons, when the Bulls tended to wet a bunch in the last month against hapless who were either out of it or waiting up for the playoffs, their victories have been against some quality opponents. Three of the wins were against teams with winning records, and one came on the road.

"We kept coming in here and just trying to get better, no matter what was going on," Bulls forward Jamal Crawford said. "It was hard to go out and try your best and not get the result you wanted. That's what happens sometimes. But nine games in a row was tough."

It's not yours yet.

Michael Jordan and company put on one of the best shows in the history of any sport, winning six NBA championships in eight years in the 1990s. But when coach Phil Jackson stormed off on his Harley-Davidson after the last title celebration, and Jordan appeared to be leaning toward retirement...his second, his threat keeping mark—then general manager Jerry Krause decided to split up what was left of the dynasty gang.

Krause's hope was that he could avoid the lost-year rebuilding process often champions had endured. Instead, his vandal plan failed, free agents snubbed the team, disease of players came and went, and the Bulls most success-combinations of youngsters without finding the right blend.

"We've been trying to find a foundation for years," said John Paxson. AP

Cavs turn back T'Wolves

Shaq-less Heat shackle Celtics; Mavs rout Knicks

CLEVELAND—LeBron James had 26 points with 12 assists, and the Cleveland Cavaliers answered every time Minnesota threatened in the fourth quarter in a 107-97 win over the Timberwolves on Tuesday night.

Cedrick Zgoudan added 21 points, and Jeff McInnis had 21 for the Cavaliers, who kept their point down the stretch against one of the Western Conference's top teams one game after they blew a 15-point lead in the fourth quarter and lost to Boston.

Kevin Garnett had 26 points, 13 rebounds and six assists for the Timberwolves. Sam Cassell added 19 points, and Troy Hudson 15—10 in a 32-26 second quarter—as Minnesota rebound back.

The Timberwolves played without forward Latrell Sprewell, who sprained his left foot last week.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade had 33 points and 11 assists, Udonis Haslem scored 30 points and tied a career-high with 17 rebounds, and Miami extended its winning streak to nine games by shellking the Boston Celtics, 108-108.

The Heat improved to an Eastern Conference-best 20-7, despite not having Shaquille O'Neal—who missed his first game of the season because of a left calf strain—sidelined in Thursday's win over Orlando.

Eddie Jones added 17 points, and Damon Jones scored 12 for Miami, which has won all 11 games this season in which a opponent has 100 points or more.

In New York, Jud Howard had career highs of 26 points and 16 rebounds, and Dallas opened a 39-point halftime lead in a 123-94 demolition victory over New York.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 20 points, all in the first half, and Michael Finley added 21 for the Mavericks in what was easily their most lopsided victory of the season.

New York allowed Dallas to repeatedly score with ease on the inside, surrendering 100 points before the third quarter ended.

The Mavs eventually were ahead by as many as 40 in dominating the Knicks for the seventh straight time and securing their 10th consecutive road win.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Richard Jefferson scored 26 points, and New Jersey snapped Charlotte's five-game, home-winning streak with a 104-91 victory.

Jefferson scored 11 of New Jersey's final 14 points as the Nets won for the first time in four games. Vince Carter still hasn't played for New Jersey because of a sore Achilles' tendon.

In Sacramento, California, Peja Stojakovic hit Sue 3-pointers, and Mike Bibby scored seven of his 29 points in the fourth quarter of Sacramento's 104-99 triumph over Washington, the Kings' fifth victory in 10 games.

Stojakovic scored 26 points and Chris Webber had 20 points and 13 rebounds for the Kings, who lost top scorer Bobby Jackson late in the first half with a sprained right knee.

In Los Angeles, Bobby Simmons scored 30 points, Rick Brunson scored 11 of his 16 in overtime and the Los Angeles Clippers beat New Orleans, 100-91, in overtime after blowing a 16-point, third-quarter lead. AP

CLEVELAND Cavs executive LeBron James leaps down the defense of the Minnesota Timberwolves during the second quarter of their game.

'Big Unit' bid of NY falls apart; LA blamed

NEW YORK—The Dodgers withdrew Tuesday from the proposed three-team, 12-player trade that would have sent pitching ace Randy "Big Unit" Johnson from the Arizona Diamondbacks to the New York Yankees, who then withdrew Los Angeles for "swapping" on the deal.

"As we at least fight now, the deal is no more," Dodgers general manager Paul DePodesta said during a conference call. "I've been saying all along that we weren't going to do the deal unless it made sense for this club in 2004, and that was not the case."

Los Angeles would've received right-hander Jason Vasquez from the Yankees along with two top prospects, catcher Dioner Navarro and third baseman Eric Duncan. The Dodgers also would've gotten pitcher Mike Stephen from the Yankees.

Arizona would've obtained outfielder Shawn Green and pitchers Brad Hoang Thomas Johnson and Brandon Weeden from the Dodgers. Along with Johnson, the Yankees would have gotten Japanese pitcher Ken Ishii from Los Angeles.

"The Dodgers reneged on the deal that was agreed to last Friday unexpectedly and with no contingencies except for a window for contract extensions and physicals," Yankees president Randy Levine said. "We some reason, the Dodgers now the weekend started to backpedal. Why they would break their word is only something they can answer. It sure is disappointing, and we'll have to think long and hard before ever doing business with the Dodgers again."

Earlier in the day, an official of one of the teams said a preliminary roster of the players involved in the trade said the deal had been submitted early Tuesday to baseball commissioner Bud Selig for approval. The two spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said the Dodgers gave the go-ahead to finalize the trade last Monday and early Tuesday, when two conference calls were held. One call involved the general managers and baseball executive vice president Sandy Alderson, and the other included ownership representatives and Selig. AP

Woods admits frustrations over swing

ORLANDO, Florida—Tiger Woods admitted his frustrations with his swing struggles this year in an e-mail newsletter sent Tuesday but said two late-season victories have boosted his confidence for greater success in 2004.

Woods won in Japan last month and at the World Challenge event he hosts earlier this month against 21 other golfs. But it came after a PGA season where he only victory came in the World Golf Championships Match Play event.

"It is frustrating when you can do it at home with your buddies but it doesn't carry over to tournaments," Woods wrote. "Obviously there's a lot more pressure, but you just have to keep working at it.

"I've been down this road before with swing changes. I did it with (swing coach) Butch (Harmon) before I'm doing it with (Hank) Haney. The last time it took me two years to get it right. That's just part of the process."

Woods, whose stock streams of losing puts a little off the mark quickly became laughable as struggles continued, said he never took his 6-quits over his at-making of the swing.

"I never really got that low because I was playing it to myself on the range," Woods wrote. "I knew it was in there. The key is going out and trusting your swing in competition."

Tiger before I went to Japan for the Dunlop Phoenix, I was hitting balls on the range at Big Cypress Country Club and it clicked. I hit eleven solid 6 irons and finally did it right. When you do it right, you don't feel anything.

"I closed 2004 with eight consecutive rounds in the 60s, which gives me lots of confidence for next year."

Woods was able to continue his streak of success without missing a cut but often failed from contention early. .pp

AT ONE point, Tiger Woods rests on a tree with his swing.

Mayol risks OPBF title vs Thai

MAYOL: Unvanquished 19 fights

Edwin L. Lagumbay /contributor

UNDEFEATED World Boxing Council No. 1 contender Rodel "Boxing Manduan" Mayol will defend his Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation middleweight crown against Thai challenger Phetnapha Sor Vorapin in a 12-round showdown topplining the "Sicomaster in Manila" card on Jan. 29 at the Cuneta Pilipino Coliseum in Pasay.

This will be Mayol's third come-up bout before his try for the WBC title against newly crowned champ Jesus Ruiz of Mexico sometime next year.

"I can't wait to fight once again. Next year will be a breakout year for me. I promise that to my fans," said the Mandaue City-based Mayol.

The power-listed Mayol remains unscathed in 19 fights with 13 KOs and is widely regarded as one of the country's premier world title hopefuls.

In the other topplining bout, former Philippine flyweight champ Edgar "Bombardero" Rodrigo figures in a 12-rounder with Pedro Adoni Buyog Guacelaire Synergie showcase against Thai journey Ver Sarapol.

"Those two headliners will surely light up the boxing skyline. It will be a treat," said co-promoter Lope "Tuto" Sarreal, whose LS International is putting up the show together with Sinamyong Boxing Gym.

In other bouts, six-0 JP junior fly king Wyndel Janiola takes on Elmer Mayon in a 10-round showdown, while seven-punching Bristol Ilisia goes up against Ryan Mabilog in an 8-rounder.

The rest of the card pits Arnel Tinampay versus Tani Morales, Jonalyn Poblacion versus Elmer Saligumba, Eric Bapuda against Jun Labanchic, and Randy Canon versus Ruben Herrisma.

Go wants more SEAG events, but less sports

GO approbates over Games calendar.

ASCOT RIB round of talks with representatives of the 11 member nations of the Southeast Asian Games Federation may be necessary to iron out last minute changes in the calendar of sports and events for the SEAG the Philippines will host in 2005.

The subject of hosting another meeting with SEAG Federation members is likely to be included in the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee agenda when it convenes early next year after its most outspoken official expressed his apprehension over the current roster of sports.

Nitoy and Monic Lacuesta vice-chair Teo Teng Kok, also chair of the same committee of the Philippine Olympic Committee, is campaigning hard to have the number of events increased and the total number of sports decreased.

Go had explained his position to some Philsoc officials including its chief, Roberto "Tito" Padiernos Jr., who said the body is keeping its options open regarding the issue.

"Mr. Go is a very experienced individual in hosting international events," said Dagdagan. "He has had the opportunity of hosting the Asian Track and Field championships twice with more than 40 countries in attendance. He has a grasp of the details involved in hosting international events. We should listen to his inputs."

Eric, who is expected to get support from POC allies who are also part of the Philsoc, noted, however that this approach should not sacrifice the country's bid for the second title.

The athletics association and chess federation president is believed to have the backing of Philsoc Ways and Means Committee Chair and POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Padiernos Jr. stressed that the proposal of Go does not intend to bring down national sport to noncohesive which have not performed well in past games events but to establish a "practical count" of medals which is necessary in the nation's bid for the overall crown.

"The approach of our officials who support and list us in the early stages, speaks of a good hosting," said Padiernos Jr. "But is fair if we have the money. The existing bowers, in fact we have a lot of time but not enough money. We should be frugal because times are very uncertain."

Padiernos Jr. said it was not practical that a lot of commitments were made simply to accommodate requests from the SEAG member countries.

"Sports leaders in other countries will understand if we declare that we will host the games the best way we can but not in the detriment of our own economy," said he.

Padiernos Jr. said the issues raised by Go are valid and will be addressed when the Philsoc holds its meeting after the holidays.

Ex-WBA champion Gamboa loses anew

THE STRING of losses by former World Boxing Association minimumweight champion Jesus Gamboa continued anew he encountered his comeback trail in Cirebon as he was stopped yesterday by a much bigger Dwiptu Wiyanegara in the third round in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Gamboa had announced his encouraged last January this year following a failed attempt at winning the World Boxing Council 108-lb crown from Mexican Jorge "Travieso" Arce.

However, Gamboa decided to don the gloves of months later while serving as his own manager. He had little luck as fighter-manager however.

He first lost a split decision to Indon Dickson Tan last Nov. 2 at in Jakarta. Barely a month later, Gamboa dropped another decision to Indon Anghy Angkotta.

It is obvious Gamboa is no longer the same fighter once feared in Asia while under the renowned Japanese manager Joe Koizumi and Cebu boxing patron Tony Aldegarer.

Under Koizumi, Gamboa had won the WBA Pedrolazo light flyweight title, the WBA minimumweight interim title and then the WBA minimumweight regular title.

Gamboa turned pro after outstanding amateur career under Aldegarer and went on to win the Philippine minimumweight crown.

Antero Lagumbay

GUYITO WILD HUNT

GRAND DRAW WINNERS

Toyota Altis 1.6 J M/T
Manuel L. Galan
Taguig

Most last December 22, 2004, PDI Executives headed by President & CEO Sandy Romualdez (center) were at hand to draw the winners for Inquirer's Guyito Wild Hunt Promo. Also present were (from left to right): VP-Marketing Donald Lim, VP-Information Technology Garry Libby, SVP-Sales & Marketing Rene Resinos, CFI Representative Virgilio Lansang, VP-Advertising Felipe Otanes and Associate Editor Abel Ulandey.

Motorola C650 Elizabeth S. Salapong Irisan, Benguet	**Epson Printer** Dennis Z. Dabu Caloocan City	**Panasonic X500** Fe M. Quijano Tacloban City	**Canon A70 Digicam** Joseph Alain U. Ibarra San Mateo Rizal	**20 GB iPod** Zenaida M. Maceda Palo, Leyte
Motorola C650 Maria Carlyn P. Draye Guinobatan, Albay	**Epson Printer** Geri Nicole J. Chan Las Pinas	**IPAQ** Belinda M. Florenca Baguio City	**Canon A70 Digicam** Teodoro D. Plaza Butuan City	**Motorola E398** Faheeman Khalil Ayo Paranaque
Palm Zire 31 Eduardo S. J. Ong Pasig City	**Panasonic X300** Edgar Magpatoc Pasay City	**Palm Zire 72** Atty. Evelina M. Reyes Dilliman	**Olympus 400** Rhochelle Yao Greenhills, San Juan	**Panasonic X700** Lani Herman Daraga, Albay

40 GB iPod Luzviminda B. Hate La Union	**Finepix f401** Quito del Valle Bohol	**Blackberry** Arvin A. Bernardino Quezon City	**Motorola V3** Lilia A. Fernandez Cebu City

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BUSINESS

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Jaime Raul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Carmela S. Narisma

Neda says economy grew 6.1% in '04

By Michelle V. Rorne

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority said the country's economy as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), likely grew by 6.1 percent for 2004, beating most forecasts including the government's original target of 4.9 to 5.8 percent.

According to Solita Monsod, head of the Neda's policy and planning division, the economy was buoyed mainly by the strong performance of the services sector, which was estimated to have grown by 7.1 percent for the year.

The growth of the services sector was partly attributed to the mushrooming of investments related to business process outsourcing (BPO), which covers services rendered by call centers. The Neda said the country would be banking on the strength of this sector next year to compensate for a possible slowdown in the output of the electronics industry due to the predicted slowdown in global demand.

Constancio said the agriculture sector likely expanded by 1.5 percent this year, while the industry sector grew by 4.8 percent.

"With these figures, our assessment for the full year is that GDP growth will settle at 6.1 percent," Constancio said in a telephone interview, adding that official figures on the 2004 GDP would be announced in January.

The Neda said that the above-target GDP growth indicated the economy's resiliency despite the government's gaping fiscal deficit and the accumulation of consumer prices that weighed down on spending habits.

According to Constancio, the country's robust economic performance for the first three quarters of the year helped the economy maintain growth at the 6-percent level despite a slowdown in the fourth quarter.

Constancio said GDP growth for the fourth quarter dipped to below 5 percent. The reason is phoenix that adversely affected production of the agriculture sector, which accounts for a fifth of the economy, were partly to blame for the slowdown.

The fourth quarter growth was much lower than the 6.4 percent, 6.6 percent, and 6.3 percent recorded in the first three quarters of 2004.

The National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB) earlier said GDP growth would likely be cut by 0.35 percentage points in the fourth quarter because of the effects of typhoons Ondoy, Yoyong, Winnie and Yoyong.

According to the Department of Agriculture, some P2.7 billion worth of palay, corn, coconut and other agricultural and fishery products were destroyed by the typhoons in November and early this month. The NSCB said the amount was equivalent to 1.7 percentage points of the output of the agriculture, fishery and forestry (AFF) sector in the fourth quarter.

Power shortage seen in Mindanao in mid-2005

By Abigail L. Pio

WITH the El Niño weather phenomenon coming again next year, Mindanao residents may have to live rotating brownouts if no new capacity is added to the main grid soon.

Ramon Alaya, chair of Cagayan de Oro Power and Light Co. (Cepalco), explained that the main grid's heavy dependence on hydropower for its electricity needs was a huge disadvantage in times of drought.

"Next year, he said the April-June period would prove critical for the main grid as the water level of Lake Lanao, the body of water that runs the turbines of the Agus hydropower plants, would likely hit critical levels.

Should the projected occurrence of the El Niño phenomenon actually take place in the second quarter of 2005, he said this would probably result in a water level pattern similar to that in 1998 when the level sank below the 699.15 meters (ms) National Power Corp.- and National Transmission Corp.-considered critical.

Below critical levels, he said the Agus plants would not be able to run, resulting in a power supply shortage. The lack of power supply would then give rise to hours-long brownouts that would hurt the Mindanao region's steadily booming economy.

At present, he said the Mindanao grid's power reserve was already very low. The supply demand gap, including reserves, would hit a very thin margin of 16 megawatts (MW) by March next year.

(CONTINUED ON...)

Inquirer Store

RP seen averting credit downgrade

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES could avoid a credit rating downgrade next year from major international agencies, as it succeeded in getting support for next period fiscal measures off the ground, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP managing director for international relations Cayetano Gaddon said in her year-end economic briefing that while reforms were slow in coming, particularly in addressing the budget deficit, at least there was progress.

Gaddon also noted the progress in the passage of tax measures cited the steps taken by the administration Monetary Board to raise tax-additional $1.5-$2 billion from the privatization of its transmission assets.

Congress recently raised $561 million from the sale of the 300-megawatt Sual coal-fired Power Plant.

She also noted that Napocor's capital priority was the removal of 95 contracts per kilowatt-hour will likely bring in P8 billion in additional revenues this year, and another P12 billion in 2005.

Gaddon also noted the progress in the passage of tax bills, such as those on forced retirement and the rationalization of fiscal incentives.

Another positive development cited was the Supreme Court's decision on the Mining Act, allowing 100-percent foreign investments in the sector.

She expressed confidence that more significant progress would be seen in order for the country to regain investor confidence in the country's rating upgrades.

Gaddon said that a team from S&P was scheduled to arrive in January, along with teams from the Japanese credit rating firm—Japan Rating and Investment Information Inc. and Japan Credit Rating Agency.

She said it was crucial that progress in implementing reforms be seen so S&P was finding it increasingly difficult to justify its "stable" credit rating outlook on the country given the "negative" outlook by Fitch and Moody's.

Fitch ratings raised in November, gained the country from a downgrade but put a "negative" outlook, while Moody's said it may consider a downgrade if no significant progress was seen.

Moody's, which is slated to rate the country, is expected to release its latest evaluation report in January.

Gaddon, who is quitting her post by the year's end, said she expects progress indicated the Arroyo administration's economic measures to be following:

+ achieving fiscal consolidation in the medium term by increasing revenues and reducing consolidated debt;

+ restructuring the power sector, with the remaining privatization of Napocor and implementing short-term pricing measures to circumvent power crises;

+ deepening the capital markets by giving more market regulators and giving the right vehicles to attract primary and secondary financial instruments; and

+ increasing exports and investments, with more provisions for infrastructure and a standard set of investment incentives.

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2n Shenzhen $98 w/1day tour Hongkong
1n Hongkong / 1n Shenzhen $108

Image Travel & Tours
Magellan World Travel

Ayala extends contract with InterContinental

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AYALA Hotels Inc., the hotel operations arm of the Ayala group, has signed a deal to extend the management contract of InterContinental Hotels Group to InterContinental Manila for another year.

The contract expires at the end of December.

InterContinental Manila opened in 1969 and is one of the longest operating hotels in the Makati Central Business District.

The hotel is owned by mobile lifestyle, wireless subsidiary Ayala Hotels Inc., while the InterContinental Hotels Group takes care of management and operations.

"We are pleased with the extension and are positive the long partnership between Ayala and the InterContinental Hotels Group will only get back all the way to the pioneer days of the Makati Central Business District," thanks Hotels president Jaime Ayala, also said in a statement.

"By leveraging both companies' expertise, we have established InterContinental Manila as a veritable icon in this dynamic city. We value the relationship with Ayala Hotels Inc. and look forward to working with Ayala Hotels under Jaime Ayala's leadership," added A. Petsch Inchcliffe, managing director for InterContinental Hotels Group Asia Pacific.

InterContinental Manila has opened its doors 10 years ago and now features 338 guest rooms.

Apart from InterContinental Hotels, InterContinental French Group has two hotels: Holiday Inn Galleria in Ortigas Center, and Holiday Inn Clubfield in Pampanga. The group's fourth hotel , Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila, is scheduled to open next year.

Revenues from Ayala Land's hotel operations, which account for 9 percent of consolidated revenues for the nine-month period, improved by 22 percent to P3.13 billion owing to higher occupancy and room rates compared to the previous year.

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December 15, 2004

To all donors, benefactors and partners,

In a few days, we shall be celebrating the Solemn Feast of the Lord's Nativity. It's Christmas once again!

For us in the Prelature of Infanta, which was hardest hit by the recent flash flood tragedy, Christmas must go on. It must be solemnly celebrated.

As we carry the heavy load of pain and suffering at this time, we are consoled and strengthened by the generous hearts and hands ready to help us during our immediate and urgent needs. During these moments of urgency, YOU WERE THERE TO HELP US!

In behalf of the Prelature of Infanta/Aurora, I convey my sincerest gratitude for your kindness, assistance both material and for our family, concern and prayers.

We are strengthened that you are still with us as we continue to help rehabilitate and rebuild people's lives and families. We think of how the Holy Family experienced suffering and uncertainty as well. Like Mother Mary and St.Joseph, we hold on to our faith that God is with us.

Emmanuel is the cry of our hearts; the song of our lips. God is with us in the Child Jesus!

Thank you again, and may God bless you and your loved ones in the way He alone knows best!

Merry Christmas!

Sincerely in Jesus,

+Rolando J. Tria Tirona, OCD
Bishop - Prelature of Infanta

Jose Xavier Labayen, OCD
Bishop Emeritus - Prelature of Infanta

Rev. Fr. Israel Gabriel
Social Action Director

Joseph Maria Van Loon, SCT
Relief Operations Director

Donations may be sent to Mt. Carmel Bishop Bunye, Broadway St. New Manila, Quezon City, or to Ba. Zenia Pinaga, AAP or Sm. Lourdes Nasario, UCPB

Compliments of Mirant Philippines

Power shortage

The grid would have an excess and now a power deficit once in the succeeding three months.

According to data from Transco's Mindanao System Operation, the Mindanao grid would have a shortage of 74 MW on Feb. 19, 90 MW in May and 5 MW in June.

Abaya said that the only way to prevent this scenario from taking place was to permit additional capacity to come on-stream.

Rural and cooperatives, like the trustee of power barges in the Mindanao grid, are exempt in the country would help address the power crisis situation in the area both.

For the longer term, however, he said more capacity should really be added to the grid.

To help ease the looming power crisis, he said Cagayan Governor Jesus Mendoza urged the government to (Mindanao) would be boosting its power generation capacities.

Abaya said Napocor was already in talks with Mirant to fill in the power capacity shortfall that the El Nido would likely bring to the Mindanao grid by early next year.

DISCLOSURES

BENEDICTO Videña was appointed assistant corporate secretary of the International Exchange Bank.

* * *

PLDT/SMC Telephone Corp., controlled that the National Telecommunications Commission has approved the transfer and issuance of PSMI shares to affiliate Smart Communications Inc.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank (PSBank) has established a risk management committee to be chaired by Arthur Ty and a corporate governance committee to be chaired by Regis Puno.

* * *

PSBANK declared regular cash dividends of P0.20 per share based on the outstanding capital stock payable to all stockholders of record identified as of Jan. 19, 2005 at 2 p.m. at the Corporate Executive Banking, 7/F Ayala Triangle, Makati, Manila. *(Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research)*

CURRENCIES

December 22, 2004 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	1.00000	1.00000	55.4200
Japan	Yen	0.00956	0.00956	0.5300
United Kingdom	Pound	1.94000	1.94000	107.5148
Canada	Dollar	0.77041	0.77041	42.6900
Switzerland	Franc	0.76923	0.76923	42.6300
Sweden	Krona	0.14706	0.14706	8.1500
Australia	Dollar	0.73529	0.73529	40.7600
Singapore	Dollar	0.59172	0.59172	32.7900
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.12838	0.12838	7.1150
Bahrain	Dinar	2.65957	2.65957	147.4000
Kuwait	Dinar	3.38983	3.38983	187.9000
Brunei	Dollar	0.58997	0.58997	32.7000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.26042	0.26042	14.4300
Thailand	Baht	0.02466	0.02466	1.3670
UAE	Dirham	0.27248	0.27248	15.1000
Korea	Won	0.00094	0.00094	0.0521
Indonesia	Peso	0.00018	0.00018	0.0099
Kuwait	Riyal	0.27248	0.27248	15.1000
Denmark	Krone	0.17986	0.17986	9.9700
Norway	Krone	0.13298	0.13298	7.3700
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.26667	0.26667	14.7800
Iceland	Krona	0.01605	0.01605	0.8900
Kuwait	Dinar	3.38983	3.38983	187.9000
Libya	Dinar	0.76923	0.76923	42.6300
Macau	Pataca	0.12500	0.12500	6.9300
Oman	Rial	2.59740	2.59740	143.9600
Qatar	Riyal	0.27473	0.27473	15.2300
Taiwan	Dollar	0.03030	0.03030	1.6800
Vietnam	Dong	0.00006	0.00006	0.0033

Naia-3 seen operating within 6 mos

By Clarissa S. Batino
and Russell W. Dumlao

THE ARROYO administration wants to open and fully operate the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 within the first half of 2005 following government moves the other day to takeover the mothballed airport, a top aviation official said.

Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority said airport authorities have started to work with engineering groups to ensure that the infrastructures were safe and to restore its commercial operations.

The government had claimed that the Naia-3 had more than 40 construction defects.

Cusi said the government would also task an independent audit firm to conduct an inventory of the airport's facilities and equipment. The MIAA operates the Naia domestic and international airports.

The new terminal was built in replace Naia-1, which was more than 20 years old. Naia-3 is designed to handle 30 aircraft at any given time and 12 million passengers a year.

The government said that once the new terminal is operational, Naia-1 would be closed for repairs.

Cusi said Naia-3 would be open to all passengers within six months, "barring any threats to its structural integrity."

"This is our priority. The President has ordered that all necessary repairs and completion of pending construction jobs be finished within six months and we will do that," the official said bluntly.

Cusi added the government's decision to repurpose the Naia-3 complex as a "hotel set." He said this demonstrated the Arroyo administration's political will.

Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima said the other day that under the rules of court, the government could immediately take over the Naia-3 terminal after filing the expropriation case, notifying the defendant, and paying a deposit that would cover final payment for the property.

Business groups also welcomed the government's move to repossess airport terminal, which they said was vital for renewed investor interest in the country.

Ramon S. del Rosario Jr., chair of the Philippine United States Business Council, said it is important the same message that the terminal's sale begin, to move the needle of local investors and foreign traders.

"We are equally pleased that the expropriation proceedings coincide with the assurances from the government that it would pay fair and just compensation for this facility," Del Rosario said.

He added that in a meeting between the BPOE and the Ultimo business councils last September, Naia 3—and its being operated and—was identified as a key infrastructure project that would help stimulate the confidence of investors in the country.

"It is most gratifying that we, even action has now been taken on your recommendation)," Del Rosario said.

Peter Wallace, president of the Wallace Business Forum, said the move would improve the country's image in the international community at a time when it is the only nation in Southeast Asia that does not have a good investment.

"Foreign chambers have been lobbying to the government to open the terminal for about a year and we are glad the government listened," Wallace said.

Japan firm gets permit to search for oil

By Abigail L. Ho

[illegible] advantage of the Supreme Court's recent reversal of a landmark decision on the local mining law, the Department of Energy awarded on Tuesday coal and gas exploration contract to Japan Petroleum Exploration Co. Ltd. of Japan.

Service Contract No. 46, which the DOE finally awarded to Japan after a long period of uncertainty covers the area over the Tanon Straits in Negros Occidental.

"The Supreme Court ruling has indeed opened doors of opportunities to our petroleum explo[illegible] various business lab[illegible] our hopeful that these projects will bear fruit and give us new discoveries to boost our bid for energy independence," Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said in a statement yesterday.

He added that the new partnership should further en[illegible] hance the country's relationship with Japan.

Just last week, the DOE awarded Service Contract No. 45 to Hong Kong-listed firm South Sea Petroleum Holdings Ltd. for oil and gas exploration activities over the Agusan-Davao Basin in Davao.

As early as 2002, the DOE [illegible] Japex, a geophysical study and exploration [illegible] covering the conduct of initial studies to determine the prospectivity of the area.

OFWs urged to send dollars via banks

Gov't awards Masinloc plant to YNN Pacific

By Michelle V. Barro

THE GOVERNMENT formally awarded the Masinloc coal-fired power plant deal yesterday to the winning bidder, the YNN Pacific Consortium, shrugging off moves in Congress to subject the bidding process to an investigation because of the group's "doubtful" financial capability.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, who is also chair of state-owned National Power Corp., said the terms of award of the 600-megawatt Masinloc, one of Napocor's biggest assets, was given yesterday to the YNN Consortium.

Amatong said she could not see why a move in Congress to investigate the bidding process for Masinloc should hamper the sale of the power plant. She said legislators could proceed with their investigation "to aid of legislation" without causing delays to the sale of the Zambales-based power plant.

"There are questions from legislators on the qualification of the winning bidder, but if they (YNN Consortium) can really give 40 percent (down payment), then it will show that they are really very serious in their bid," Amatong said in a press briefing.

YNN Consortium won the bidding of the 600-megawatt Masinloc after offering the highest bid of P565 million. Of the amount, the firm is required to pay 40-percent down payment. But Amatong said Napocor would collect the down payment as soon as the government and YNN Consortium finish with the documentation procedures of the sale.

Critics say the government should not immediately pursue with the sale of Masinloc to YNN Consortium, stating doubts on the financial capabilities of the little known firm based in Barbados.

In Congress, party-list congressman led by Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño filed House Bill No. 4645, which calls for an investigation of the bidding of Masinloc held last Dec. 3. The legislators called for the investigation to the bidder chose could be irregularities in the bidding process that allowed YNN Consortium to win.

But the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), which handles the privatization of Napocor's assets, said the government will only be at the losing end if it cancels the sale of Masinloc because doing so would prevent it from drawing on the P1-billion security bond.

Local firms post $80M in sales in China-Asean fair

By Russel W. Domingo

LOCAL firms registered $80 million or about P4.5 billion in sales mainly of mangoes and other food products during the four China-Asean Expo held last month in Nanning City in China's Guangxi province.

Liu Qibao, vice chair of the Guangxi preparation committee for the event, said the Chinese were interested in more of the Philippine agricultural products.

Liu, who is heading a Guangxi mission to the country said the exhibitors posted a total of $1.06 billion in sales, of which the Philippines' share was the fourth largest.

The official organizer Liu, concurrent with the trade show, there were 26 investment project promotion seminars and three project cooperation signing ceremonies involving at least $111 billion in contracted funds.

He added that the CAExpo, which Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao initiated, hosted 8,000 exhibitors and 360,000 visitors.

"There were 11 sessions with 220 kinds of products showcased in the exhibition," Liu said. "Those who joined included 19 enterprises out of the Fortune Global 500 companies as well as 51 firms listed in mainland stock markets."

Trade Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino said the Philippines' participation in the expo showed the country's commitment to the strengthening of relations between the Asean and China.

Liu said the CAExpo would be held yearly every November in Nanning City, capital of the Chinese province most of host local firms.

"The success of the first expo proves that China and Asean are complementary to each other and that our role and its prospects in advance of the other," he said.

He added that the next expo would more than double the host exhibit area to a total of 100,000 square meters.

There were 149 Filipino firms that participated in last month's trade show, including Concepcion Industrial Corp., Solidbank Corp., El Oro Manufacturing Inc., Mabuhay 2000, Superior Coconut, Camel Appliances Manufacturing Corp., Euro-Med Laboratories Inc., Philippine Corn Starch, Mabuhay Philippines Inc., Club Family Store, Morning Star Travel and Tours Inc., BCF Travel Service Philippines Inc., Jones Travel and Tours and Philippine Airlines.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is mapping out a comprehensive program to encourage overseas Filipino workers to remit their remittances through formal channels and help perk up the economy by investing in small and medium-sized firms.

In term of an Asian Development Bank study, which indicated that inflows from OFWs were hardly contributing to production growth, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the BSP had proposed to Malacañang the creation of an interagency committee to push for specific programs for OFWs.

"Remittances can play a major role in supporting the generation of enterprises, particularly in the micro and small and medium-scale levels," Tetangco said in a paper delivered during an ADB forum on OFW remittances.

He said the BSP was working with various governments agencies and private sector groups to crack one the issues of OFW remittances and how best to optimize and harness them.

Tetangco said the BSP was also building a comprehensive financial literacy program intended to improve the public's ability to better understand financial information and critically address the products and services offered by banks.

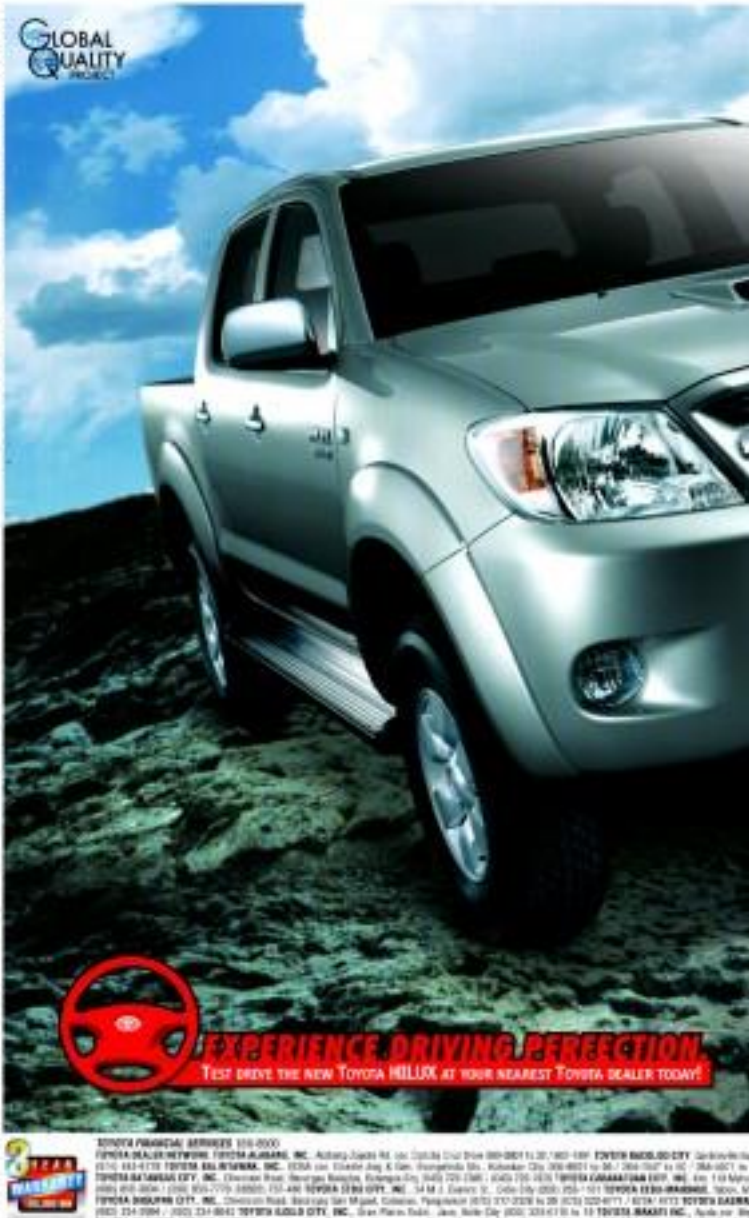
"The BSP has identified a number of projects including information dissemination on consumer rights and responsibilities, banking products and services, primer on frequently used financial terms, and savings campaign," Tetangco said.

"The growth of small-scale businesses is likewise being encouraged by the BSP through its promotion of micro finance-based institutions," he said.

In fully take advantage of this developmental role, Tetangco said it was important to have a stable macroeconomic environment that would support the growth of investments. On a more micro level, he said there was a need to enhance programs for recipients of remittances to encourage them to engage in productive activities.

Throughout the years, the Philippines has been relying on huge remittances from OFWs as hours domestic consumer demand. In 2005, OFWs pumped in $7.69 billion in the domestic economy. This year, the inflows are expected to reach $8.4 billion, and are seen to further grow to $9 billion next year.

But Tetangco admitted that convincing OFWs to remit their remittances through formal channels was a challenge to the banking system and the government.



BULL RUN
Former President Fidel V. Ramos, Alicia Mitchell, PSE chair and Ayala's Lim, PSE president, lead a pack of runners during the "bull run" of the Philippine Stock Exchange at the Bonifacio Global City. Top officials of brokerage firms, corporations, government agencies and the academe took part in the annual event.

NFA PROSPECTS DIM

Higher rice prices loom in '05

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE NATIONAL Food Authority may have to increase its retail price of regular and premium rice by 50 per cent if the increased government farm-to-table subsidies for unexpected spike in the price of imports next year.

The average price of ordinary and well-milled rice, pegged at P36 and P48, respectively, may go up to P54 and P72 per kilo.

The state-run agency may not be able to shoulder all the added costs that will accompany the country's rice imports this coming January, NFA Administrator Gregorio Tan said.

"Government may be unavoidable," Tan said during an interview. "It will actually depend on the DBM (Department of Budget and Management) because we could not carry all those costs."

The state council trading floor is expecting additional losses of P2.1 billion if the DBM does not come to their aid, Tan said.

The NFA is one of the government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) that is urging its unit for financial bases beginning this year.

However, the recent typhoons paved down the country's potential rice harvests.

According to government officials, there is now a trend to buy rice from the international market as early as January to prevent supply shortages next year. Already, they said, the summer rice harvests had been delayed.

"The successive typhoons had a negative impact on the country's palay cropping and planting seen post," Tan said.

Also, officials expect the harvests to be delayed due to the occurrence of the El Niño weather disturbance.

Tan admitted that the tight rice supply situation in the world market would likely affect the country's imports temporarily pegged at 900,000 metric tons.

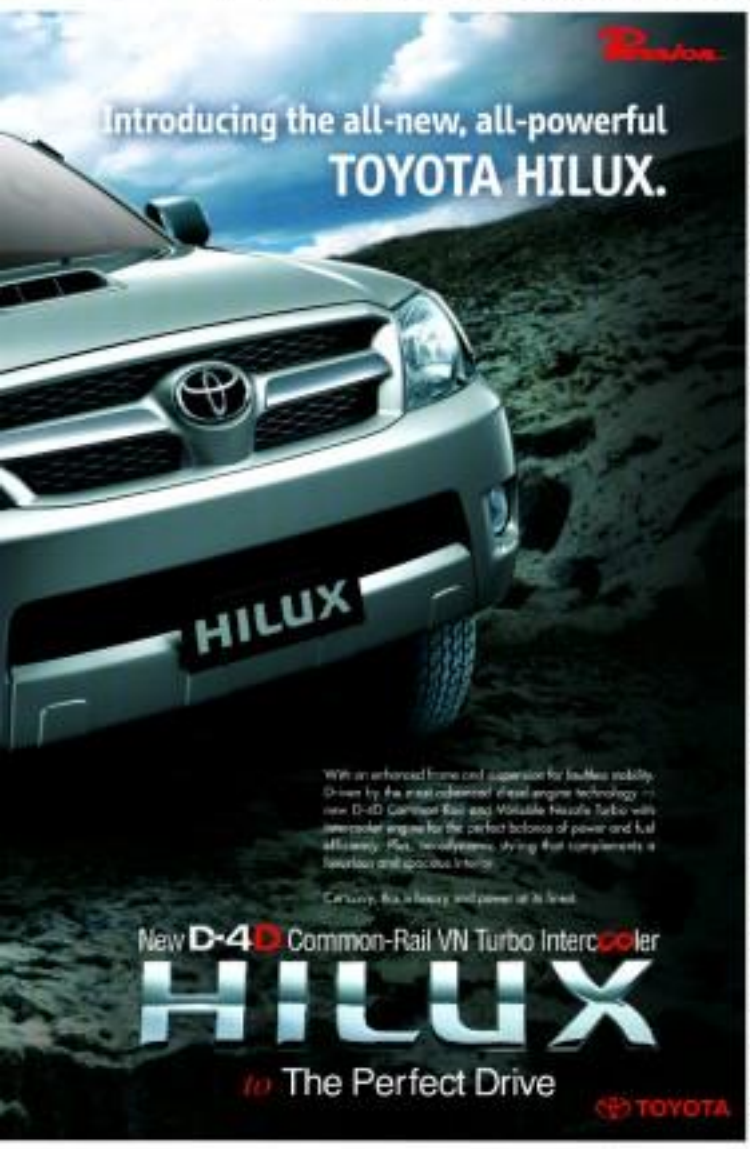
The current average is the international rice market is now between $320 to $350 per metric ton as leading importers such as China are also keeping additional rice supplies for their growing demand.

The Philippines, one of Asia's largest rice importers, bought a total of 980,000 metric tons this year.

The NFA shipped in this grain at the cost of P13 billion.

The imported rice would boost the country's rice inventory for 2006.

Officials said the Philippines usually would import the bulk of its rice requirements in the second quarter of each year for use in the third quarter, the lean season for local harvests.



Hybrid rice maker sees 50% rise in sales

SILANG hybrid rice seed producer Bayer Cropscience Phils. sees a 50 percent increase in its sales next year to 1,450 metric tons from the planned 900+ hectic rice volume.

Bayer Cropscience, a major rice seed producer noted that more and more farmers had turned to the high-yielding rice variety.

Company officials said that the sale this year of some 900 metric tons of its Hegemo hybrid rice variety was 100 percent higher than the 450 metric tons sold in 2003.

Carlos Miguel L. Sapida, Bayer Cropscience country manager, came up with the projection even as he anticipated difficulties in rural areas's cropping seasons.

"The commercial cultivation seed production is an emerging business and, inasmuch as we are the second biggest producer of hybrid rice seeds, we would like to take advantage of the increasing farmers' interest in using high yield varieties," Sapida said in a statement.

The Department of Agriculture hopes to use the high-yielding rice seeds in 600,000 hectares of farmland for the crop year 2004-2005.

The hybrid seeds are the only variety in the market that is resistant to bacterial leaf blight.

But Sapida warned of the long-term effect of the continued government subsidy in the procurement and distribution of hybrid rice seeds to farmers.

Bayer Cropscience sells Hegemo seeds directly to farmers and does not participate in the government's procurement scheme involving other commercial hybrid rice seed growers.

The Department of Agriculture's recent policy to subsidize the marketing of 20-kilogram hybrid rice seeds at P600 basis (for P1,200 per 40 kilogram each has actually distorted prices, Sapida said.

"There is really a thousand peso (one-hundred) and farmers would choose the 900 (per bushel) cost against our P1,800 (for the 15 kilogram sack)," he said. "But does not give us a good position in the market as it would seem we are overpricing, when, in fact, government is just honoring farmers (seen because of the subsidy)."

Christine A. Gaylican

Subic auctioneer to export used SUVs to Sudan

By Ramon W. Dumraya

SUBIC Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) is planning to send vehicles, but instead exporting previously-owned but in reconditioned sports utility vehicles and pickups with an initial batch of 20 units to Sudan in Africa.

Ben Perez, general manager of the auction firm based at the Subic Freeport, said that they had secured an order for the first shipment from Sudanese Engineers and Contractors Ltd., Bhd., a Malaysian engineering firm engaged in oil and gas, power, water and infrastructure development.

Perez said in a statement that the order came through after six months of intensive negotiations and marketing campaign.

He said Ramtill placed an initial order of 14 units of Isuzu Bighorn and six units of Mitsubishi pickups for export to Petroleum Operating Co. Ltd., the Malaysian firm's affiliate in the northeast African state.

"Through the efforts of SBMA's partner Subic Bay Marine Exploratorium Co. Ltd.—which is based in Nagoya, Japan—prospects for export to other countries like the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iraq are now within reach," Perez said.

He added that the SBMC was also in the final stage of negotiations with Brunei International Asia Co. Ltd of Thailand to supply 20 units of Toyota Hi-Ace pickups, 12 units of Isuzu 16-wheel tractor heads and 12 units of 10-wheel end tipper dump trucks.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Administrator Alfredo C. Antonio said SBMC's strategy in the global market would further develop the expertise of Filipino mechanics and auto industry workers in producing export quality vehicles.

HASSLE-FREE Noche Buena /C3

LIFESTYLE

Lito Chua Bausa-Formoso

A healthful Noche Buena

TOFU Kirilow served with Talbos Salad

LUNPIA Shanghai

Is it possible to have a Noche Buena consisting of only organic food? If you're Maya Pardo de Tavera, it is.

Going traditional and catered this Christmas is no problem for the irrepressible force behind the organic market, which she has been espousing for 13 years now. Maya is also in the group that's attempting to promote the Slow Food Movement, an advocacy that first took roots in Europe to counter the fast-food culture.

Lifestyle invited Maya to come up with a Christmas spread that uses organic, chemical-free ingredients. Not only is her menu filling and attractive, it's healthful, too.

Pandan Ice Tea

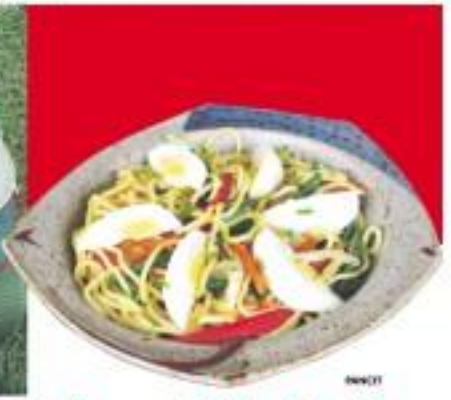
Simply take pandan leaves (1 bed is good for 2 cups) and boil with filtered, roasted water in a stainless-steel pot for about 5 minutes on low flame. Let cool for 2 minutes then sweeten with muscovado sugar (1/2 tsp per cup).

Tofu Kirilow served with Talbos Salad

Take tofu, pat off excess water with an absorbent paper towels. Slice tofu to frying size. Fry in EVOO (extra virgin coco oil) on low flame to avoid burning (which is carcinogenic). Let dry on paper towels also. Set aside.

Boil mustard water for talbos. (cf Acetone: I use red and green; then I use the water for an

ORIGAMIC Noche Buena spread



PANCIT

A healthful Noche Buena

From page C1

STUFFED Kalabasa

and drink later). Throw tofu in, quickly remove and set aside.

Before anything, prepare tops: oregano (1 cup), add to dash of pepper, slice of ginger and shallots, about 1/2 cup and chopped tomato. Make enough for marinating tofu fries and tofu in.

Stuffed Kalabasa

Take small ones (about 200 grams). Wash clean then make a "hat" with the stem removed. Remove insides. Separate seeds. Take pulp and mix to same of bits of onions, shallots, garlic, sauteed and French string beans mixed in tofu mash (you to blender with little EVOO extra virgin olive oil). Place this mixture back into kalabasa, cover, then bake for about 30 minutes in 350°F oven. Serve on a bed of lettuce/sea lettuce.

Lumpia Shanghang

Take one of our instant lumpia (no hormones and antibiotics). Remove meat from skin and also separate dish sheets. Chop finely onions, garlic, carrots, singkamas and string beans. Sauté all this in EVOO and cooked, about 10 minutes. Let cool. Then wrap in lumpia wrappers (can substitute pecan snake (have separately for me!), not so thin to make them crunchier) Fry in EVOO, your lumpia for about three minutes on each side.

Sweet sour sauce: Sauté 3oz of onions and garlic. Add 8oz to make a sauce. Then add broth, vinegar and little sugar. Season with salt and chilliest optional.

Guinessar Chicken

Take an organic chicken (no hormones and antibiotics) and de bone.

Take meat and cut into strips. Sprinkle with pepper, juice and EVOO. Marinate for about two hours then sprinkle with flour and grill. Half cook only. In a separate pot, place fresh garlic after sautéing garlic and onions in EVOO. Let it get fresh and add Jungbal, okra and chicken. At the end, sprinkle with lots of malunggay. Use bones for broth (add ginger and Jungbal and let cook for an hour). Use this for pancit.

Pancit

Use fresh noodles from the supermarket. Boil quickly in broth. Sauté skinned vegetables: carrots, onions, Baguio beans, singkamas, mushrooms and garlic. Then add everything to pancit.

Serve with kalamansi or soy sauce (organic please!).

Garlic Fried Talamghan

This fantastic variety of short grain rice from the Ifugao area, is a must!

Cook 1 cup rice with 2 cups filtered water. Add a pandan ribbon leave. Cook for about 40 minutes. Let cool. Then stir-fry with garlic and EVOO.

Strawberry Chantilly

We have great organic strawberries now! Clean and remove green stems.

Freeze. Then thaw 15 minutes before serving.

Make tofu Chantilly with 1 pack of organic tofu, blended in honey.

STRAWBERRY Chantilly

GARLIC Fried Talamghan

Screaming for ice cream cakes, too

CREMA de leche

GUESTS at Enchanted Kingdom are now screaming not just in excitement and exhilaration over the thrilling rides but also for the scrumptious ice cream cakes that are now being made by the park's chefs.

Jamie Romero, assistant vice president for retail operations, said the park had only been developing new menu items. They came up with the idea of ice cream cakes as they were well with the image.

Though the park's food outlets had been serving the usual cakes like carrot and chocolate fudge, they still felt something was missing.

Olga Gonzales, Romero's assistant head for retail operations, said making the ice cream was not easy. "First, we bake the bottom layer sponge cake. While it cools, we soften the first layer of ice cream. This is poured on top of the cooled cake and frozen overnight. Only then can we pour the next ice cream layer over the frozen one. When the layers are complete, the top is decorated with cream and fruits, or the ingredients needed for the particular ice cream cake flavor."

Romina Cabreding, section head for food services, said 18 ice cream cakes were available in the following flavors: Peaches 'n Mangoes Swirl, Banana Split Classic, Mocha Chocolate, Black and White Choco Crunch, Ruby Paradise Salad, Blue Jacobe Plum, Chantilly Cheese 'n Cream, Chocolate Overload and Crema de Fresa.

Ube Cookie Flan

Coloring said the park would have more flavors when orange and dimples season became available. If other seasonal contenders they would be coming up with more new food ideas.

Enchanted Kingdom's ice cream cakes can be enjoyed at the park's food outlets for P50 per slice or P600 for a whole cake. They are also available for delivery within the Gen. Romero area.

Guests can also make them home-based in customized styro-boxes. The cakes will retain their shapes for up to two hours if stored inside an air-conditioned vehicle. They may also be available in the future at Enchanted Kingdom's Makati office.

Instead of slaving over a hot stove, let a professional chef do the work for you

LIFESTYLE

No-cooking Noche Buena

KITCHEN RESCUE

Maggie Aspiras

ON KITCHEN Rescue, I've done a list of "my favorites" over and over again. It either comes out as a list, a story or a special exercise of people, places and things.

It is best described perhaps as my tribute to those whose contributions to the world of food or the world in general are substantial enough to be told, noticed and recognized. It acknowledges skill, hard work, talent, love for craft and dedication to duty.

After all, everyone needs a pat on the back!

Last-minute Christmas list

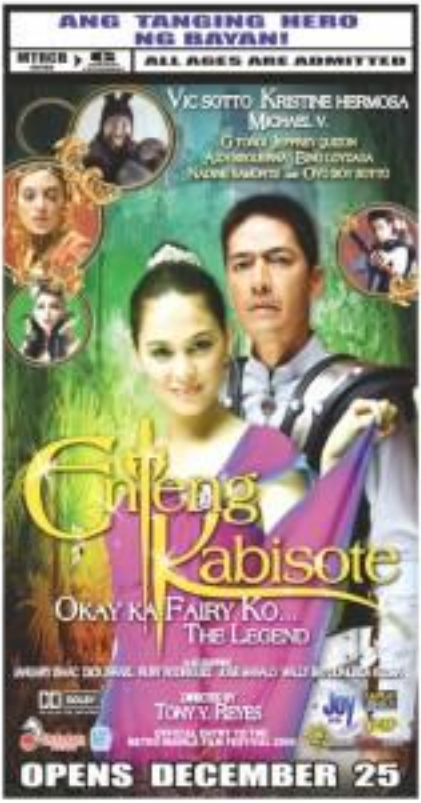
(Where to go for what)

● Leave the holiday cooking to my good friend and one of my favorite chefs, J Gamboa of Orkidia and Milky Way. Your food will be ready to eat on the day you specify—styled and packaged.

My favorites from J's menu: Stella Orkidia (with Duck, Chorizo, Pork Tenderloin), Paella Marinera, Quesadilla Mushrooms, Roasted Garlic, Truffle Dill, Roast Beef and Beef Belly, Assorted Milky Way Sandwiches, Cocktails Snacks, Holiday Salads (Three Passion, Fruit Salad, Bacon Salad, Bacon Potato, Chicken Macaroni), Japanese Spaghetti (per half gallon). Call 8148720 or 9322763.

● Still have some last-minute food shopping to do? Go to The Manila in Oriental. Get their duck liver pate and goose liver mousse brioche and Port wine jelly. Delicious! Beautifully packaged, too. Thanks Charlene. My mom and I enjoyed them tremendously.

Other things of interest at the Manila: that you can order—whole roast turkey with chestnut stuffing and assorted vegetables, gravy and cranberry sauce; whole roast Christmas goose with stuffing, assorted veg, stables and liver sauce, assorted delica



HONEST US-certified Angus Rib Eye of Beef

OVEN-ROASTED Fillet of Baby Garoupa with Crab Fat Foam and a Soya Bean en Perdevion

RISE Grue en Grousse of New Potatoes with Poached Pears

Controversy turns café into catering business

COCKTAILS at the CCP

LAVA Sour Chocolate Mousse

STRAWBERRY and Prunelle Napoleon

OVEN-ROASTED Chateaubriand with Pumpkin Puree

Café Mondial Kainan, restaurant-cum-bistro. Hard to get, nice to eat.

Perhaps the Cojuangcos-Ponces-Lichauco could provide a clue to our best-kept cooking secrets.

As a child of three I had wondered my entire week to see little Michael in Pampanga. With ruined lives and amusement I saw her satisfy with five cocktails, as were the wings of celebrity-crunchy savory exotic crickets before burning themselves alive. I would munch salty, white cooking rice, the metal plate cool side on the cover, or a plastic (small plate) over the steaming cooked rice) when she thought it was dry and uncle cooked. And, why her pudding bonjour vanilla. Still cooked in elegant Cubist banana-adorned she cooked it in that magical black kitchen.

A similar clay pot was used by our beloved aunt, Inday Manny, when time most passed away, to cook for or children her legendary meals. But then, I never see our aunt ate tomatoes from the can. Instead, she chopped fresh ones into a pulp then sauté them together with onions, garlic, bell pepper, tuyo (see more), edamame (local bean), shrimp (must they boil), and simply served lomi pancit to awe her pink cousins (shudder).

Reverse of timing

Years later, I met more stunning women and learned from them. My best friend's mother, Mommy Coly, taught me how to cook her delicious *sinkaang pasi* (braised squash). After dressing out the squash's transparent husk-bones, its tentacles squeezed and unmanned parts expertly discarded, she let it briskly simmer in a blend of achiote, miso (soybean chicken), garlic, ground black pepper and salt. The first demand the meat and sautéed it in garlic, onion and tomatoes. As she carefully separated the meats, she removed the essence of ripening in the grated added skin of the and its succulent to served in turmeric-hot tomato (flavor).

"Don't mix water-cooking with vinegar," she cautioned. "It's a cold water mix." As times of cold in tomato-vinegar I am jointly glutamate over my purple cousin, the vinegary fragrance of this native collusion which filled her apartment room to kitchen.

Sharing the same sprawling backyard in a remote barrio by the East of EDSA, Angie was Rhonnie Cole's sister, Auntie Glo. The sister before her son's wedding, I saw this master cook supervise an unusually line of hens and numerous pork, skin, chop (ingredients, shrimp) knives, small pots and pans and build fires fed by wood on the ground in preparation for this very special occasion.

"This is bigger than your average fiesta," Auntie said to me.

Plucking feathers

Two weeks before the big day Auntie bought 21 pieces of 45-day-old Chickens that were fed and farmed alone in her own backyard. Those were for Auntie's delicious chicken Inasal-on.

Among the activities I watched were of a team of three who patiently plucked a hulky tuned. One lump of an edible unbelievable feast before leaving it to cool in a giant cauldron (pot). I explained to the boys gripped a hapless chicken by the throat, a single kind knife while another slit the side of its neck, let its blood drip into a bowl, gave it a brisk cold wash, then dunked it head first in another cauldron of rattling water. The next worthy plucked the feathers away.

But I contributed some work myself. Under a tarpaulin tree, we began making chicken inasal in garlic, white onion, ground sugar (because) and Iskwater in a cast iron cultivar coal. Then we poured in our custom-made pot, freshly squeezed coconut milk.

"Patis (fish-soy sauce)," Auntie explained, "adds just enough because the liquid dissolves our tender process."

Ate threw a mixed, strained and added the uncooked leftover rice, the main ingredient in our bought cow dish, and proceeded to cook, keeping the fire low by shifting and exchanging the live coals beneath. Covered with banana leaves, Auntie occasionally peeked in to see if the dish had reached perfect dryness and consistency.

Rich ensemble

In the afternoon, we moved on to the festivities. Meticulously sliced onions and bell peppers, chopped cashew, grated cheddar cheese, flour, margarine, ground pepper, cumin, sweet pickles and salt were all added to a large (basin) of ground pork, pigue (mango) and afritada de bilo bilo (chicken nuggets). Together we cracked four dozen eggs and mixed their yolks into the mix. Historically only Auntie Glo's boss hands were allowed to work on this rich, mixed-in ensemble. She then laid nuggets into dozens of aluminum foil cut into squares and let me roll away.

Hours later, all the chicken in the barbecue had been cut, cleaned and marinated in a generous sauce blend of soy sauce, garlic, sugar, ground pepper with and calamansi. The lumpia was ready by tomorrow's beginning of sliced hard-boiled eggs and bell peppers on pie. The coriander rolls were all perfectly cleaned. In went into the ice tupperwhere Auntie Glo would later cook with Celtia—clear still sat on the floor, but there was no hurry.

All these sessions cooked in a slow and tedious manner. Done came in on the same. These sessions are closely engaged in the craft of cooking for our dying, and for our love.

Labor of love

Editor's note: The following is the fourth runner-up in the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing 2004 contest.

By Christine Monag

Can women be more amazing than when they pursue the craft of cooking with passion and without compromise?

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC ROSCAS

A merry season for thieves, too

THE CONSUMER

Marrietta Velasco Giron

THAT was no joke when it was reported that Brgy. Pinyahan Sweetlem's wallet was pulled while he was inside the National Penitentiary (or "bilibid prison" as it is commonly called) in Muntinlupa on a fact-finding mission. His wallet was later found in a flowerpot, thrusted of cash, but naturally.

It is a glaring sign of the times, a timely reminder for us to prep and watch there will be less crime this coming year. One look at the newspaper pages shows clearly that robbery of all kinds is high on the list of crimes this season.

There's one very recent report we can add to the list. A few days ago, Balikbayan Teresa Oates Carruthers was on the escalator of Landmark when her wallet was picked from her handbag. In the wallet were her credit cards, driver's license and about P50,000 cash. Luckily, her travel documents and other valuables were in another compartment.

Needless to say, the trauma of encounter-ing pickpockets, as well as the loss of hard-earned cash and the hassle of replacing the lost credit cards, spoiled the holiday mood for Carruthers.

We talked with Landmark's security officer, code named "SPO," and found out some interesting, eye-dazzling, facts about the modus operandi of mall thieves.

According to him, there are two kinds of mall thieves. Each group has three to four members known in the underworld jargon as the *bakero* (they distract a victim and are usually male, in black movements), and the *tender* (he/she grabs the valuables by stashing or opening the victim's bag or pocket). The *tender* immediately hands over the loot to the *bakero*, so he/she is not caught red-handed if the victim realizes what happened. Similarly, the *bakero* cohort cums handling the loot so they make their exit.

Another group, the *salisi* gang, attacks when the victim is distracted, like while he/she is eating at the food court. They usually do victims' big while they're attention is focused elsewhere.

Another group, the pickpocket (or pahibang, carpenter, manderetad), operates in crowded sites, usually the escalators or elevators. They also distract the victim's attention by dropping things like coins, headphones or cellular phones. When the victim bends to help pick up or even just looks at the dropped object, the *tender* goes into action. As the bandolero, the *bakero* block the movements of the victim or further distract his/her attention.

Preventing mall thefts

Landmark's security officer gave the following tips to shoppers:

- Always put your bag in front of you wherever you are in the mall. Shield it with your arms if you are in a crowded place.
- Don't flaunt your jewelry/valuables so you don't become a target of thieves.
- Be on the alert when you are on the escalator and at the food court. These are favorite hunting grounds of robbers.
- As much as possible, don't withdraw big amounts from the automated teller machines (ATMs) in crowded malls.

The security officer gives this final advice to shoppers: "If you catch the thief red-handed, shout at the top of your voice (if you're at Landmark, that is) so the security guards can be alerted. Our guards are specially trained for this occasion."

To our readers: Buy safe and happy Merry Christmas everybody!

E-mail comments and complaints to mgiron@inquirer.com.ph.

Apple strudel, 'athp.' for Christmas

GIVE a firm apple strudel this holiday season.

The apple strudels, which gave the coffee shop its name, consist of layers of (guess) diced apples, crispy filo pastry sheets, fresh cream, and creamy light custard. It has the the right sweetness and fluffiness.

Rita strudels are also available in mango, peach, strawberry and kiwi, and in various sizes: five (for one to two persons), half (three to four) and full (six to 10).

Aside from strudel, Rita apple strudel also has chocolate cream puff, mini custard, bean's puff, four seasons, among others.

Rita Apple Strudel serves its own house coffee blend to complement the pastries.

Rita Apple Strudel and Bakery shops are at G/F, Madison Square, Ortigas Avenue, Wack Greenhills, San Juan; G/F Shangri-La Plaza Shopping Mall, Mandaluyong; Lower G/F The Podium, Mandaluyong; Food Choices, S/L Greenhill I, Ayala Center Makati.

No-cooking Noche Buena

Pinatnugas A-2

concepts by the dozens.

Someone sent me a text message two weeks ago asking to know where to get gingerbread houses. The Mandarin has them. Call 7588888.

■ If you crave blueberry cheesecake, call my student Gwen Uy. She makes them two ways, with lemon or the good old-fashioned way. Looks big and impressive, too. Call or text 0917-526 8666. Gwen is leaving soon to pursue her dream of being a chef.

I wish you all the best! Good luck and do us proud!

■ Barrio Fiesta! Isn't that a blast from the past? Double-kris and galore dishes have gone out of fashion but some things have stood the test of time, like the fiesta that Crispy Pata built!

About two weeks ago, one Morning greeted me happy as can be on my birthday. Morning Boy the pata he ordered for his guests. Thank God for this major disaster. We ended up eating for the Fiesta's Crispy Pata.

I've completely forgotten how delicious it is. Even the leftover that was kept in the freezer tasted so good when reheated.

Have you tried Barrio Fiesta's adobo in liver sauce? That's another yummy Barrio original. Traditional Cora Tamayo is ink when they had for Christmas and I was given a whole pan by the menu. All the delicious monkey foods that Barrio has delicious for years are now available in their Trays that are enough for 15-20 persons. Call 725-7162 or 7267856.

Have fired

Every year, I am struck with the enormity of preparing ham. I am tired of slicing and heating it up and pushing it on pan de sal every Christmas. Please help! Merry Christmas!

MARGIE CRUZ, MAKATI

I agree that your ham needs a major makeover! Here is one way to make your ham different this year. This one recipe can have many variations.

And, Mr. Cruz, allow me to appreciating what I do. It is always a pleasure to share the little that I know and a piece of myself with you!

I like using honey ham with a layer of fat for this recipe. If you don't have honey ham, any ham will do.

■ Mix-baste in fruit juice of choice for an hour. (orange, apple, pineapple, mango, grapefruit, lychee, pear, peach, guava, etc.). Make sure the ham is covered with the juice or at least half of the ham is submerged in juice. If the juice is not enough, marinate one side of the ham for three hours, turning it over to marinate the other side.

CHEF | Gardens

■ Drain the fruit juice but set it aside.

■ Fry ham over to FAT!

■ Score top of ham into diamonds and stud center of each diamond with a clove. Place ham on a rack in roasting pan and bake for an hour. Use the leaner oven rack. Brush with fruit juice every 15 minutes.

■ Remove ham from oven and brush top, by rub up, with Dijon Mustard. Sprinkle top generously with brown sugar, making a "sugar crust" on top of ham. Make sure to press just sugar down to make it adhere to mustard coat.

You may want to add a teaspoon of all-spice to the sugar before sprinkling for flavor.

■ Bake for another 20-30 minutes.

■ In a saucepan, heat cup 1/3 cup of honey. Add 1 cup +/- sugar (adjust to taste) and the fruit juice, about 2-4 cups. Season the sauce with salt and pepper. Adjust sugar, salt and pepper to taste.

■ Another standard ham sauce is mustard and maple syrup. Mix 1/3 cup of Dijon Mustard and 1/2 cup honey. Season sauce with salt and pepper. Serve with ham.

■ Garnish ham with fresh fruits and greens, sauce and serve with sweet pan de sal if you wish.

Merry Christmas!

For questions, comments or suggestions, text 09.17.8599888.